Student Retention and Transition Series

NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUTS IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

RONALD MACKAY, Principal Investigator
LAWRENCE MYLES, Research Associate

This research project was funded under contract by the Ministry of Education, Ontario. It reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Ministry.

Ontario

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Sean Conway, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

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ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study, commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education, addresses the issue of the high dropout rates of Native students from Ontario provincial secondary schools. It investigates, mainly through structured and open-ended, in-depth interviews with Native and non-Native educators, and Native dropouts and their parents, the major factors which contribute to or accompany absenteeism and eventual dropping out.

No precise and reliable data are routinely collected by any Native or government agency, federal or provincial, for the purpose of monitoring, evaluating, adjusting or refining the delivery of educational services offered through the Ontario provincial school system to Native students. From the Nominal Roll statistics maintained by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to facilitate the disbursement of federal funds for the education of Natives resident on reserves, certain trends for that group are identified. While the historical perspective displays a trend towards an increasing proportion of Native students resident on-reserve to remain in school longer and to graduate in higher numbers, the provincial graduation rate for this category of student is unsatisfactorily low. It varies from district to district and from school to school and ranges from comparatively high rates in some southern districts and some schools to extraordinarily low rates in some northern districts and other schools.

No parallel data base is maintained at the provincial level or the school level for Metis/off-reserve Native students attending Ontario provincial secondary schools.

The perceptions of the key players in the provincial secondary school scenario, viz. Native and non-Native educators and Native dropouts and their parents, are examined according to a number of factors which accompany or contribute to the early leaving of Native students. The factors examined are - English language skills, academic achievement, student-staff relationships, parental

support, home-school communication, peer relationships, future plans, discrimination, curriculum, attendance, counselling, living in boarding homes, school size, school rules, participation in extra-curricular activities, travelling time, early marriage/pregnancy, attitude of the school, financial problems, and welfare.

The perceptions held by the groups of key players on the importance of many of these factors to dropping out diverge considerably. The divergence of their views is accentuated by the isolation of the groups and the dearth of interaction and cooperation between the key players directed at cooperative efforts to improve the retention and graduation rates of Native students.

All groups agreed that communication between schools, Native communities and Native parents was too limited or, in some cases, virtually non-existent. Moreover, there is a tendency for each group of key players to believe that the lion's share of the blame for the high dropout rate can be mainly attributed to those factors not under their own control but under the control of others. All groups of key players generally agreed that the completion of school with a secondary graduation diploma was a desirable goal for Native students. At the same time, many agreed that the strategies by means of which this goal might be achieved eluded them.

On the basis of results obtained from a diagnostic instrument designed to identify students in danger of dropping out so that timely remedial action can be taken (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High Schools, in press), the percentages of on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve students at risk of dropping out were examined at two sites, one northern, the other southern. While Native students in the samples were identified as running a higher risk of dropping out than previously identified non-Native students, Metis/off-reserve students demonstrated a higher at-risk tendency than on-reserve students attending the same provincial secondary schools. Girls in the Metis/off-reserve category showed themselves to be the group with the highest proportion of members likely to drop out before graduating from secondary school.

Both Native and non-Native educators expressed a concern that the original focus of this study was overly negative. They complained that a unique focus on failure and dropout would inevitably ignore the improvements that they individually and cooperatively have achieved over the years in improving the educational support and delivery systems and in raising the retention and graduation rates of Native students enrolled in Ontario provincial schools. Accordingly, a study of a number of successful scenarios was made and the factors which are believed to contribute to the success are listed and discussed. The overriding factor appears to be the willingness of key players at the local level (chief and council, local education authorities, provincial school principals, teachers and parents) to establish direct contact with one another, openly expose their concerns, express their committment to addressing their concerns and agreeing to initiate actions which they themselves have the immediate will and resources to undertake, and to jointly monitor the progress of these actions.

The study contains one superordinate recommendation, 43 additional recommendations and includes a number of suggestions made to the authors by the key players.

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The authors would like to thank all those individuals who so willingly provided us with questions, answers and suggestions (Native students and their parents, members of First Nations and Native organizations, Native and non-Native administrators, educators and counsellors both within and without the Ontario provincial school system); Keith Lickers, Ontario Ministry of Education, Supervisory Officer of this study; personnel of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; the numerous researchers, Native and non-Native, who administered questionnaires and conducted many of the interviews which provided much of the data on which this study is based; Ms. Linda Quinn for her typing and secretarial assistance from the beginning of the project to the preparation of this final report; and Randall Halter, Miau Yu, Karla Holmes and Patrick McGuire for their technical support.

SECTION 1

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY, THE APPROACH ADOPTED AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the issue of Native student dropouts in Ontario public secondary schools and to make suggestions to the Ministry of Education concerning strategies for both reducing Native dropout rates and maximizing Native student success at school.

The term Native in the report covers both Status Indians resident on-reserve as well as Status Indians who have taken up residence off-reserve, Bill C31 Status Indians resident off-reserve, non-Status Indians and Metis. This latter group is referred to throughout the report as Metis/off-reserve.

APPROACH ADOPTED

A Quantitative Description of Native Education in Ontario

At the outset, an attempt was made to quantify the range and extent of the issue concerning Native attrition, retention and graduation as it relates to provincial secondary schools.

This is neither a simple nor an easy task to accomplish. There is no provincial or federal data-base which has, as its main purpose, the provision of information of this type for the purposes of educational monitoring, evaluation or research. However, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) maintains the Nominal Roll, a record of school registration for Indian students resident on-reserve principally for an accounting-auditing purpose related to the federal responsibility for paying for the education of this group. With the assistance of INAC we were, with certain important qualifications, able to obtain a quantitative description of the issue for Native students resident on-reserve.

It is less easy to obtain a parallel picture for Metis/off-reserve students. For educational purposes they make up part of the general population and hence no educational records which identify them as Native are kept by the federal government, provincial

government, school board or school. In 1985, however the Ontario Metis and non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA), now the Ontario Metis and Aboriginal Association (OMAA), conducted an enumeration study of the Metis and non-Status Indians in Ontario. This study included information concerning education and was our principal data source for the quantitative description presented of the Metis/off-reserve population.

The quantitative information on the educational characteristics of the Native population of Ontario is presented in Section 2 of this report.

Review of the Literature and Previous Studies on Dropouts/Native Dropouts

An early phase of the study involved a comprehensive review of the research previously undertaken on the dropout phenomenon in general but with particular attention to studies relating to North American Indians and in particular, Canadian Indians.

This review is included as Appendix 10.

Information-gathering Instruments

From our review of previous studies an inventory was drawn up of factors believed to be closely associated with or to contribute to dropping out. These factors were used to create two information-gathering instruments. The first was a questionnaire composed of Likert items, each item incorporating one of the factors previously identified (Appendix 1). The second was an open-ended interview protocol which used each informant's responses to the Likert items as a starting point and subsequently led into additional and also open-ended questions (Appendix 2).

The instruments were modified in the light of the experience obtained piloting the instruments in two communities with dropouts, students still in school, teachers, parents and counsellors and in light of discussions with key informants.

Final versions of the Likert questionnaire, which contained 42 items, and the open-ended interview schedule were prepared in identical formats for use by trained or untrained interviewers with the four target sources (described below) from which we intended to obtain information in person to person encounters. The purpose of the identical format was to permit triangulation of information across categories of interviewee informants.

Key Informants: The Sources of Information

The Likert and interview protocols were intended for use with those most closely involved in the issue of Native retention and attrition from provincial secondary schools, namely:

Native students who had dropped out of a provincial secondary school prior to completing a graduation diploma; **parents** of such students; **Native personnel** in official or professional roles which involved them in the day to day concerns of Native students (band social counsellors, Native education counsellors, members of Band Education Committees, youth employment career counsellors, Native teachers, etc., **This group is referred to as "Native Educators" throughout the report**); and **school board personnel** (including directors of education, superintendents, principals, and vice-principals, teachers and counselling staff) **who are collectively referred to as "non-Native Educators"**. All informants from all groups who participated in the study were guaranteed confidentiality for themselves, their communities, their school boards and their schools.

The study had been conceived to take into account both on-reserve and off-reserve Native people and so the above categories of Native dropouts and the parents of such students were further subdivided into on- and off-reserve subgroups. Furthermore, the province was divided into two regions, north and south, by an imaginary line drawn from Sault Ste. Marie to Moosonee (both of which were deemed to fall into the "northern" region). Table 1 summarizes the sources of information used in this part of the study.

	NORTH & SOUTH		NORTH		SOUTH	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
EDUCATORS (NON-NATIVE)	84	27	39	25	45	29
EDUCATORS (NATIVE)	38	12	17	11	21	14
DROPOUTS - ON RESERVE	91	29	41	26	50	33
DROPOUTS - OFF RESERVE	41	13	29	19	12	8
PARENTS - ON RESERVE	28	9	15	10	13	9
PARENTS - OFF RESERVE	28	9	16	10	12	8
TOTAL SURVEYED	310	100%	157	100%	153	100%

Table 1 Numbers of Informants from the six categories from whom Likert responses and/or Open-ended Interviews were obtained.

Although the Likert questionnaire and the open-ended interview were originally intended to be used together as a single protocol, and were with the majority of informants, a minority of informants provided answers to the Likert questions but declined to be interviewed and another smaller minority of informants provided in-depth interviews but no completed Likert questionnaire. All figures in Chapter 3 of this report were created from Likert questionnaire results alone, and the discussion which follows each includes information from interviews whether or not they were accompanied by a completed Likert questionnaire.

The discussion of the information obtained from the Likert questionnaires and the open-ended interviews is contained in Section 3 of this study.

Gaining Access to Key Informants

In order to gain access to informants, various approaches deemed most appropriate to each group were adopted.

School boards were selected on the basis of either a very high dropout rate or a very low dropout rate according to Nominal Roll

data for the past decade obtained from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The directors of education of these school boards were contacted, the study explained and our request made to interview key informants in the education centres and secondary schools. Without exception their wholehearted cooperation was immediately forthcoming.

To gain access to band-related educational personnel, a letter (Appendix 3) was sent to every education counsellor or equivalent in every band on the master-list (96 persons) supplied by the Ministry of Education of Ontario explaining the project and requesting their suggestions as to how best, in their view, to conduct this part of the study.

To obtain information from the Metis/off-reserve sources, OMAA provided the services of its directors and/or their delegates in 10 locations. These individuals were trained and supplied with complete field kits to carry out the work. Metis/off-reserve sources were supplemented in other locations by interviews conducted by both the OMAA Education Specialist and the principal investigator of this study.

Additional Sources of Information

Additional information concerning the perceived obstacles to decreasing the Native dropout rate and suggestions as to how to maximize student success was sought from the directors of all school boards in Ontario (as listed in the Directory of Education 1986/1987, Ministry of Education, Ontario) (Appendix 4), and all bands in Ontario (as listed in a band directory supplied by INAC) were invited to participate (Appendix 5). Furthermore every Native organization listed in the Ministry of Citizenship & Culture's "Provincial and Regional Native Organizations in Canada" was invited to contribute to the project (Appendix 6).

Bands were invited either to appoint an interviewer of their own choosing or to permit one of the research team members to conduct the interviews. In the former case, complete and self-contained field kits containing instructions on procedure and the information-gathering instruments and 90-minute audio-tapes to

record the open-ended interviews were supplied to those delegated by the band to conduct the interviews.

A Parallel Focus on Success

From early in the course of the study, many stakeholders including Native organizations, band leaders, Native counsellors, school board personnel and school principals expressed their concern that the focus of the study centered as it was on Native dropouts, was overly negative. Such a focus, they believed, ignored both the efforts invested and the improvements gained in the educational attainment of the Native students in provincial schools by these groups working cooperatively and individually over many years. This study was responsive to the concerns of these groups and accordingly undertook as detailed an examination as was possible, given the primary focus of the study, of situations characterizing various successful contexts identified by the groups concerned.

Various strategies were adopted to obtain information about these successes - interviews with band chiefs, social counsellors, education committees and Native trustees, and visits to reserves, secondary schools, elementary schools and education centres associated with high rates of academic success among Native students. Native students who had already been successful in obtaining their secondary school graduation certificates or were likely to complete them within the year were interviewed (Appendix 7) or asked to complete Success questionnaires (Appendix 8). Native students undertaking university studies were also interviewed in depth.

As was the case with the dropout component of the study, all participants in the "success" study were guaranteed confidentiality for themselves, their communities, their school boards and their schools.

The "success" study is reported in Section 5 of this report.

Identification of Students at Risk of Dropping Out

It became increasingly obvious as the dropout study progressed that the most difficult groups to gain access to, and therefore information from, were the dropouts and the parents of dropouts particularly those in the Metis/off-reserve category. To some extent, we had anticipated such difficulties and had been told repeatedly by many sources, both Native and non-Native, and believed ourselves that prevention is better than cure. Hence, we had commissioned an analysis of the results obtained from another Ministry of Education dropout study, (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High Schools, in press). The purpose of that study was to identify and suggest appropriate support for students in danger of dropping out. That study had not previously distinguished Native from non-Native students grouping all students under the heading "general population". The analysis of the results obtained on the dropout diagnostic test of some 70 Native students (undifferentiated as to their provenance i.e., on- or off-reserve) convinced us that the diagnostic instrument was a potentially valuable way of gathering information on the profiles of Native students at risk of dropping out so that appropriate interventions might be undertaken. Thus with the cooperation of the directors of education we undertook a substantial study oOf Native students in two large secondary schools, one in the "northern" and one in the "southern" sectors. We gave the students thOe opportunity to identify themselves as resident on- or off-reserve. Table 2 shows the numbers of male and female students from the on- and off-reserve groups who participated in the "at risk" study in both the northern and the southern sites.

			METIS			
	ON-RESERVE		OFF-RESERVE		NORTH	SOUTH
	n	%	n	%	n	n
TOTAL	92	—	101	—	156	33
BOYS	39	42	51	50	72	18
GIRLS	53	58	50	50	84	15

Table 2 Number and Percentage of Native Students Surveyed in the "At Risk" Part of this Study, On- and Off-Reserve.

The results of this component of our study are contained in Section 4.

Recommendations

Finally, as was required by the terms of reference drawn up for this study by the Ministry of Education of Ontario, we have drawn up a series of recommendations for attention or action based on suggestions made by each of the groups of participants who supplied the information for this study and based on our own insights gained from seeing the Native dropout phenomenon from the various and inevitably, to some extent, different, perspectives of these groups.

These recommendations are contained in Section 6.

SECTION 2

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DROPOUT ISSUE

Status Indian Residents On-Reserve

No group in Ontario, whether Native, provincial or federal, maintains statistical records concerning the education of Native students for the primary purpose of providing a data-base for education research. The statistics department of the Ontario Ministry of Education does not separate out Native students as a distinct subgroup in the data it collects. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada maintains the Nominal Roll principally as a budget control system to ensure that the federal government meets its financial responsibility for the education of Registered Indian students. Schools provide Native education counsellors with registration and attendance records of Registered Indian students primarily so that accurate invoices for contracted education services can be submitted to INAC. Bands may use these school records to provide parents with information about the progress of their children who are attending provincial secondary schools. In other words the primary purpose of such educational records that are kept on Registered Indian students is to support the day to day management of their education and to provide a system of financial accountability for the disbursement of public monies. The Nominal Roll and the records kept by schools satisfactorily perform the function for which they were created but constitute an inadequate research base for monitoring either the educational progress of individual cohorts of students or the educational system which serves them.

Metis, Non-Status Indians and Status Indians Resident Off-Reserve

Financial provision for Non-Status Indians, Metis and Status Indians resident off-reserve is no different from that made for non-Native students. Thus, no separate record for those groups is required for management purposes, and hence no group, whether Native, provincial or federal, maintains statistical records concerning the education of students from those groups for the specific purpose of monitoring their educational progress.

The Nominal Roll

When data on the education of Registered Indians are sought for research purposes, researchers turn to the Nominal Roll, INAC's budget control system, and often attempt by various means to tease out of the data-base information which the Nominal Roll was not set up to provide. Such was our task in this investigation and INAC has been cooperative in providing us with whatever Nominal Roll data we believed we could use for the purposes of this study.

The Limitations of the Nominal Roll for Research Purposes

General Limitations

1. The Nominal Roll, because its principal function is to record those students for whose education the federal government bears financial responsibility, does NOT include information about the Metis, Non-Status and Status Indians resident off-reserve.
2. Over the years, the Nominal Roll data-base has been modified, which means that it lacks the consistency over time necessary for precise research purposes.
3. The Nominal Roll reports data for the INAC's administrative regions which are similar to but not identical to provinces.

Specific Limitations

The ideal way to determine the attrition and retention rates of Status Indian students resident on-reserve and attending Ontario provincial secondary schools would be to track cohorts of students registered in Grade 9 over a five or six year (or even seven year) period. Each individual student would be accounted for and a record kept of what happened to each.

Such a record, even on a small scale, for a limited number of cohorts is virtually impossible to obtain from a system which was not specifically designed to provide that information. Even if such a project were planned for the future, say by the Department of

Education, the complexities involved are likely to be so great that the final figures would likely be of questionable accuracy and use. To mention some of the difficulties in looking at records of intact grades, any Grade 10 will be made up not only of the previous Grade 9 students who remained in that school and were promoted, but also students from the previous Grade 10 who were not promoted, students who transferred in from other schools, students who had been out of school for a year for personal or health reasons, etc.

Thus, it must be borne in mind that the following tables do not represent intact cohorts of students marching lock-step through the grades. Specifically, the data have not been adjusted to account for:

i) students dropped from the Nominal Roll because their parents moved off-reserve;

ii) students retained in a grade one or more times;

iii) students who drop out and then return, sometimes a number of years later;

iv) students who complete high school on a part-time or correspondence basis;

v) students who transfer to private schools and receive no federal assistance;

vi) students who start their education in a provincial school but complete secondary school in a council-operated school;

vii) students who transfer to schools outside of Ontario (USA, Manitoba, Quebec) to complete their secondary education;

viii) out-of-province students who start Grade 9 in Ontario but who return home to complete their education.

All of these limitations represent unavoidable sources of error in our attempt to characterize the retention and attrition rates of Status Indian students attending Ontario provincial secondary schools.

Furthermore, we have had to address the matter of determining an appropriate reference against which to interpret the data presented. Since our data do not represent accurate longitudinal studies of intact cohorts, it is not admissible to use the tables

to claim that a given percentage of a given Grade 9 four years earlier did or did not obtain a secondary school diploma. Our decision, therefore, has been to focus on our tables as displaying trends over time in the educational performance of Status Indians resident on-reserve. We feel confident in the interpretation of the data as illustrating the tendency for the on-reserve Indian population to make more or less use of Ontario's provincial secondary schools, to remain for an increasing or decreasing number of years and to obtain fewer or more graduation diplomas.

Registered Indians in Provincial Secondary Schools

A General Picture

Over the past decade, the number of registered Indian students attending provincial secondary schools between the grades of 8 and 13 has risen from about 2,000 to 3,200, an increase of about 60 per cent. During the 1988/89 school year, approximately 3,220 registered Indian students are attending over 200 of the 780 provincial secondary schools in Ontario.

About 80 of these schools have 5 or more registered Indian students enrolled, 65 schools have more than 20, 30 schools have more than 50 and 15 schools have more than 100 registered Indian students enrolled across Grades 9 to 13.

Table 3 shows a trend towards an increase in retention rates for all secondary school grades throughout this decade. However, besides these figures showing infusions of students at certain points from, for example, band-controlled schools, there is the issue of how students are registered in any particular grade level. Registered Indian students recorded in the nominal role as registered in Grade 12 may in fact simply be in their fourth year of secondary school as opposed to being within eight credits of the secondary school graduate diploma. While some schools rigidly follow the Ministry of Education's directives (September Board Report, 1988 Instructions, Policy Analysis and Research Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education), many schools believe that allowing students to remain with their homeroom class for registration purposes is more likely to bolster their self-esteem. Moreover,

School Year	Grade 9 Provincial Schools Only	Grade 12 as % of Grade 9 (all schools) Three years earlier
1974-75	723	36
1975-76	556	52
1976-77	579	54
1977-78	671	51
1978-79	711	52
1979-80	687	60
1980-81	647	90
1981-82	656	80
1982-83	585	91
1983-84	894	63
1984-85	933	65
1985-86	912	67

Table 3 Registered Indians (Status Codes 1, 7 and 8)
Progress through Provincial Secondary School, 1984-1985
Ontario

Year	Number Awarded	Number Awarded as % of Grade 9 Enrolment	
		Provincial Schools	All Schools
1983	282	40	27
1984	349	50	34
1985	329	50	31
1986	342	52	34
1987	323	55	32
1988	299	33	31

Table 4 Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diplomas 1983-1988
(Status Codes 1, 7 and 8)

since for all purposes other than registration students will be in subjects and levels appropriate to their career choices, there can be no deleterious educational effects such as studying at a level beyond their ability. Even where schools are rigorous about registering in Grade 12 only those students who are taking the majority of their courses at the Grade 12 level, and retaining for registration purposes those who are not in Grade 11, INAC and band education counsellors are likely to equate year 1 in secondary school with Grade 9, 2 with 10, 3 with 11 and 4 with 12 for purposes of nominal role recording, irrespective of the procedures followed by any individual principal.

So while the majority of those students who enrol in Grade 9 in Ontario provincial schools do not eventually earn sufficient credits to complete a graduation diploma, the majority are remaining in school until Grade 12 (four years in secondary). Many Native and non-Native educators tend to view the increasing retention rates in a positive light. They believe that it reflects an increase in the satisfaction Native students experience in provincial schools, that such students are developing better habits of regular attendance, punctuality and persistence and that they will have credits recorded on their transcripts which may provide them with access to certain apprenticeship schemes and/or better opportunities for employment in general. It is also argued that their increased participation in and appreciation of schooling will result in their encouragement of their own children to strive for educational achievement. The evidence of the increase in retention rates is thus seen as a slow but sure indication that Registered Indians are perceiving education in provincial secondary schools as an instrument with which they can promote their own development in ways which they themselves determine.

The retention rate, however, is not uniform across the province. According to the Nominal Roll figures for this decade, retention between Grades 9 and 12 varies from an annual average of more than 90 per cent for registered Indian students attending provincial secondary schools in the Districts of Peterborough and Brantford to an annual average low of about 11 per cent for such

students attending provincial secondary schools in the Nakina District and 9 per cent in James Bay District.

Graduation Rates of Registered Indian Students in Provincial Secondary Schools

While it would be unwise to employ graduation rates as the sole criterion to assess the intellectual vitality of Ontario's Native youth or the ability of the Ontario provincial school system to educate them, graduation is an important issue since it is the principal gateway to higher education, university degrees and the professions.

Table 4 shows a graduation rate for registered Indian students in Ontario provincial secondary schools of between 33 and 55 per cent of the Grade 9 enrolment three years earlier. Again, these figures are flawed in ways previously explained in this section. Using equally flawed figures, it has been estimated that in the 1970s three-fifths of general population students entering Grade 9 could expect to receive a secondary school graduation diploma three years later (Stamp, Robert M. Ontario Secondary School Program Innovations and Student Retention Rates: 1920s - 1970s. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1988). Hence, we could make a parallel statement that in the 1980s between one-third and just over half of registered Indian students entering Grade 9 in Ontario provincial secondary schools can expect to obtain the secondary school graduation diploma three years later. Such general statements, however, are of limited usefulness because they tend to disguise the very considerable variations that exist between Native communities and within the contexts in which they receive their education across Ontario.

Metis/Off-Reserve Students

It is not possible to provide a parallel description of the retention and attrition rates of Metis/off-reserve students because an equivalent data-base does not exist. Nor would it be a simple matter to create one. Being Metis is largely a matter of self-identification. Table 5 clearly illustrates the difficulty of attempting to obtain data on Metis and non-Status Indians.

Metis and non-Status Indians (MNSI) core population	50,000-94,000
MNSI non-core, self-identifying	67,000-130,000
MNSI non-core, non-self-identifying	170,000-540,000

Table 5 Estimated Population of Metis and Non-Status Indians in Ontario

Source: Demographic Studies of Native People in the Urban Setting, 1981, quoted in Maidman, F. Native People in Urban Settings, A Report of the Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting, 1981.

> Core MNSI are those people of Native ancestry who identify closely with their Native heritage, share many characteristics of status Indians, are identified by government agencies as the total MNSI group in need of programs. The non-core, self-identifying MNSI group is aware of its Native heritage, but is part of, or is primarily settled, within non-Native society. Some may drift out of the core category, depending on employment conditions, kinship ties, etc., but they are not included in core group government estimates. Non-core, non-self-identifying MNSI consist of people having Native ancestry but not a cultural awareness or affiliation with Native people. According to some estimates, this may be the largest group (Taylor, M., Miller, J., and Oliveira, M. The Off-site Unit. Comprehensive Education, 39(375), 13-17, 1979).

During the course of this study, we met many people proud to acknowledge their Native ancestry (e.g. a grandparent or parent who was Native) but who themselves had no ties or affiliation with Native people and did not feel themselves to be Native. Also, many teachers and principals comment on how erroneous one could be by assuming that physical characteristics and status as a Native could be directly related.

In 1985, the Ontario Metis and Non-Status Indian Association initiated an enumeration project. From the data collected we were able to produce the following table:

Male and Female	Grade 8 or less	9	10	11	12	13	College
Age:20-29 Total 853	53	121	212	115	264	30	58
100%	6.2%	14.2%	25%	13.5%	31%	3.5%	6.8%

Table 6 Education Level Attained by a Representative Sample of Metis and non-Status Indians.

Source: (Enumeration 1985, Ontario Metis and Aboriginal Association Series Sa-SF, CT1-CT20.)

Approximately 6.2 per cent of the sample between the ages of 20 and 29 had not continued their schooling beyond provincial school. About 31 per cent reached Grade 12, some 8 per cent fewer than registered Indians living on-reserve.

Table 7 serves to show the discrepancy between the proportion of Native and non-Native persons who according to the 1981 Census of Canada, possessed a high school diploma or a higher qualification.

	Native	Non-Native
Women	30.6%	48.9%
Men	33%	53.3%

Table 7 Persons with High School Diploma or Higher: Population 15 Years and Over Not Attending School, Ontario 1981.

Source: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada customized data, based on 1981 Census of Canada, reported in Economic Status of Native Women in Ontario, Ontario Women's Directorate, Government of Ontario.

There is clearly a lack of reliable record-keeping regarding the education of both on-reserve Natives and especially Metis/off-reserve Natives in a form which lends itself to the accurate

determination of Native student retention and attrition in provincial secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATION # 1

That Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Statistics Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Education in cooperation with the First Nations, provincial school boards and schools establish and maintain an appropriate data-base to record and monitor educational progress of both individuals and cohorts of Native students from their date of entry into secondary school, including relevant information concerning their academic record in elementary school.

RECOMMENDATION # 2

That a parallel data-base be established and maintained by the appropriate agencies in consultation with the organizations representing the Metis/off-reserve population, provincial school boards and schools, for Metis/off-reserve students enrolled in Ontario provincial secondary schools.

SECTION 3

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO NATIVES DROPPING OUT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL? VIEWS OF DROPOUTS, PARENTS, AND NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE EDUCATORS

Introduction

Factors accompanying and/or contributing to Native student dropout from Ontario provincial secondary schools are first discussed in terms of the constructs drawn from the review of previous dropout studies (See Appendix 10) and interviews with key informants. Each of these constructs is made up of between one and six factors. The Likert item statement, containing each of the factors in any particular item, precedes the bar chart for the item. The bar charts were created from the completed Likert Item Sheets in order to give the reader a simple visual indication of the trends in the response patterns of the six groups of respondents. The discussion following each construct is based on both responses to Likert Item statements and upon the in-depth interviews conducted with the informants. Because the interview format was not constrained, informants were free to expand upon any item at will. Hence the discussion of any construct or factor may expand into other issues perceived by the informants to be significant or related.

3.1 Language Skills

They had difficulty with English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in class.

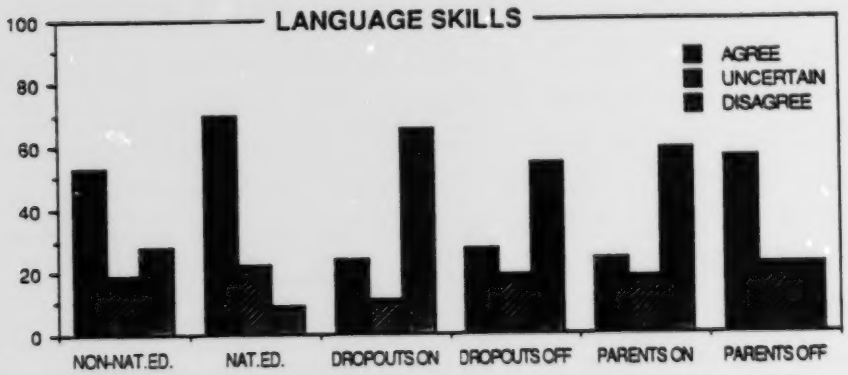


Figure 1

There is considerable agreement among Native and non-Native educators that inadequate English language skills contribute to a Native youth's decision to drop out. The interview data reveal three areas of concern. Educators throughout the province cited weaknesses in basic English literacy skills as characteristic of dropouts, irrespective of their ethnicity. With respect to Native students, educators were of the opinion that in some cases these language problems were the result of inadequate instruction in the elementary schools, but most linked the difficulties to socio-economic factors: parents' lack of education, the dearth of reading activity and materials in the home, a lack of encouragement to read at home, the dominance of television as a recreational activity, and inadequate or non-existent library facilities on some reserves. Native students who come from such backgrounds are likely to experience difficulties with reading and writing demands made on them in secondary school. While educators tend to point to a lack of support for and reinforcement of literacy skills in the home environment as exacerbating poor language skills, parents are more likely to feel that the educational system bears full responsibility. "The three Rs are not what they should be in school today - they're not what they were years ago" (Parent, Metis).

A second area of concern cited by Native and non-Native educators was the out of school use of a non-standardized variety of English by some students. The sociolinguistic background to this state of affairs is complex, but the fact is that Native children from many communities come to school with little previous exposure to the academic variety of English commonly used to explore and express public knowledge in textbooks and classrooms. Insensitivity on the part of the school community to the students' variety of English and their need for time, possibly unacknowledged by some teachers, to master the new register may pose yet another threat to the Native student's already fragile sense of identity and self-esteem. Any obstacle which prevents students mastering the language variety and the literacy skills required for acceptable school performance will tend to deflect them from success towards failure.

Thirdly, some students, especially those from isolated northern communities where a Native language is normally spoken, can experience difficulty because English is their second, weaker language. Not only are these students affected by the same weaknesses in basic literacy skills observed in many southern and mid-northern dropouts, they also experience difficulty in understanding what is said in class and in participating themselves. While some schools with a high proportion of Native students from the north do offer transition programs for non-Native speakers of English, the feeling is that the "southern ESL establishment" has tended to focus its professional attention on recent immigrants and has neglected to address the needs of Canada's Native people.

Although fewer dropouts and on-reserve parents linked difficulties with language skills directly to early school leaving, they confirmed the educators perceptions that language problems had a negative effect on the academic and social life of many dropouts attending provincial secondary schools. Educators suggested that discomfort with English leads to avoidance behaviour. Students with weak language skills may avoid speaking out in class and this may be interpreted by teachers as an unwillingness to participate or even an unwillingness to pay attention in class. Some dropouts confirmed that when they did not completely understand what was being said, they felt unable to participate fully in class and were more inclined to engage in daydreaming. When students with weak English language skills do not comprehend the task that is being asked of them in class or for homework they may be too shy to ask for clarification.

Deficiencies in reading and writing skills have additional negative repercussions. Students may avoid submitting homework for fear that it will be graded poorly or even rejected outright. Several educators made a further link between this language-related behaviour and the problem of poor attendance. They suggest that if assignments and homework are not completed, students may give in to the temptation to skip that class in order to avoid trouble with the teachers to whom the work is due. By missing classes they fall

further behind until they have no idea what is required of them or how to complete further homework assignments. They find themselves sucked into a vortex from which the only escape is opting out.

RECOMMENDATION # 3

That a program to develop literacy and language skills across all subjects of the secondary curriculum as required by students undertaking formal secondary school education be created, implemented and monitored for effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION # 4

That an integrated content/English as a second language program for academic and other school purposes be developed, implemented in provincial secondary schools where required and monitored for effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION # 5

That the Ministry of Education scrutinize the referral to special education of Native students to ensure that students displaying a lack of proficiency in English as their second language are not misdiagnosed as learning disabled.

3.2 Academic Achievement

They were getting poor grades in school exams and tests.
They were kept back one or more grades.
They were failing one (or more) course(s) in school.
They were falling behind with their homework.

They often didn't pay attention in class.

They were not good at doing the work the teachers asked them to do in class.

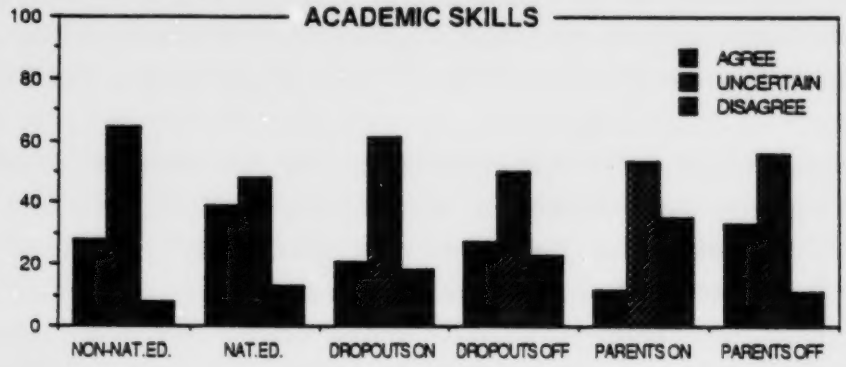


Figure 2

Of the six factors associated with academic achievement, three - poor grades, failing courses, and homework - were deemed important by more than half of the educators, dropouts, and parents who responded. According to non-Native educators, getting poor grades in tests and exams or failing courses is characteristic of many secondary Native and non-Native school students who drop out "in order to avoid experiencing continued failure in school work." However, in the case of Native students when poor grades and course failure are added to other commonly present negative factors, Native and non-Native educators thought that this group is at even greater risk of dropping out.

Both of these groups of educators were unanimous in their assessment that poor grades and failure were not universally the result of a lack of ability. The recurrent problem that appeared throughout the interviews was absenteeism - both skipping only certain selected classes or truancy from school as a whole. In some cases, educators cited inadequate preparation in elementary schools as a reason for poor achievement in secondary schools, especially for those students coming from remote communities. Others felt the course content and tests were biased towards values and experiences not entirely familiar to some students, thus leaving these students at a disadvantage. Many educators felt that Native students who dropped out were lacking motivation, support from home and career

goals; this lack had a negative effect on their academic performance and general persistence with school work. Although educators observed that some Native dropouts had been performing poorly, others from apparently identical circumstances had been doing well prior to dropping out. ("Some dropouts were failing but others were not and yet they also drop out. We have no idea why," (Principal). In a few instances, educators gave examples of Native students who were successful academically and who, within a few credits or even weeks of graduation, unaccountably dropped out.

Dropouts and their parents confirm the perceptions of educators. The most frequently stated reason for poor academic success was absenteeism. Several felt that poor grades and failing courses was due to weaknesses in language skills, while others felt failure to do homework and complete assignments was the chief cause. Many dropouts reported that they had not learned how to seek help comfortably, or that they believed school staff were unwilling to help them with their academic difficulties. Age/grade displacement was not reported as an important contributing factor because of the credit system which tends to blur grade distinctions in many secondary schools. Students may remain with their homeroom class for registration purposes and take the courses appropriate to their level of progress. However, age/grade displaced students coming out of the elementary system into Grade 9 experience discomfort among their younger classmates. In some elementary schools, students are promoted on to the next grade even though they lack the skills and knowledge expected by that grade and this state of affairs, in the view of one Native educator, may be more detrimental than age/grade retardation. On the other hand, complaints were voiced about elementary schools who retained students in Grade 8 until they were sixteen and legally able to leave, never having experienced life at a secondary school.

Native and non-Native educators see the failure to do homework as a key factor among Native dropouts. The only schools where this did not figure as a contributing factor were vocational schools or in basic-level programs where there may be little or no homework set. Educators interpret the failure of Native dropouts to do

homework in a variety of ways, but the common denominator seems to be the home environment. Many have the impression that there is a lack of quiet study space at home. Both groups thought that there was a lack of parental encouragement and supervision, with regard to homework. Another explanation was the observation that Native kids may have irregular arrangements for staying at homes other than their own, such as with grandparents or other relatives, which may interfere with the completion of homework assignments. Non-Native educators tended to take this as an indication that Native parents do not give due care and attention to their children's academic work and are remiss in providing guidance, encouragement and discipline. Native educators were more likely to point to the low educational attainment of many Native parents which results in parents who are unfamiliar with the educational system in general and the notion of homework in particular and find themselves at a loss to provide their children with assistance in completing homework and assignments. Furthermore, some Native educators suggested (though others denied this) that Native parents are generally less directive in their dealings with their children than non-Native parents - children are regarded as individuals from an early age who must decide for themselves what they want to do. This difference in attitude to parent-child relationships was often cited in reference to school-related discipline.

It was reported that student boarders from the north generally have little experience with homework before they come to the city. This lack of familiarity with homework, coupled with the distractions present in their urban milieu and a lack of supervision in some boarding homes, may substantially reduce the child's chances of academic success. Students who spend a long time bussing to and from school may also fall behind with their homework if they feel "too tired" at the end of the day to do it.

Dropouts reported either hating homework or finding it too difficult to complete. Boarding home students mentioned their own lack of discipline as a factor. Other dropouts cited responsibilities around the home and absenteeism as reasons for their failure to do homework. Parents felt that they weren't

adequately informed by the school authorities when their children fell behind in their homework and they also felt that they lacked the skills and knowledge to assist their children. (It is worth observing, however, that parents do not have to "assist" their children but rather provide encouragement and the conditions necessary for them to study.)

Paying attention in class was not perceived as a major problem by most of the respondents, with the exception of Native Educators, almost half of whom agreed that the inability to pay attention in class contributed to dropping out. Native educators pointed out that Native students may be reluctant to take part in classroom activities or volunteer answers because of shyness, fear of appearing stupid or because of inadequacies in their oral English skills. This lack of participation may be interpreted by teachers as an unwillingness to pay attention.

Some non-Native educators interpreted the item as a matter of whether or not Native dropouts were well-behaved in class, paying attention or disruptive. In two mid-northern sites a difference was perceived between local and non-local - "fly-in" - students. Local students were perceived as being less attentive and more disruptive than "fly-in" students. The latter often tended to be so quiet that educators had difficulty assessing whether they were mentally present.

Over 40 per cent of dropouts surveyed disagreed that they found it hard to pay attention, a finding which may support Native educators feeling that their passivity may often mask or disguise their participation for non-Native educators. Those who did experience difficulty in paying attention cited boredom, lack of interest in particular subjects, language difficulties, truancy, lack of sleep and substance abuse as reasons for inattention. Lack of attention in class may also reflect the fact that many teachers "just talk and talk" without varying their techniques or the demands made on the students.

In responding to the probe on substance abuse, educators thought that this was no more a factor for Native dropouts than it was for non-Natives (although in several communities there were

reports of gasoline sniffing). However, educators pointed out the dire consequences on the school life of children who come from alcoholic families. Rather than generalize, let us examine a particular situation in some detail.

One educator contrasted at length the differences between students coming from a community that had successfully taken steps against alcoholism and another where the problem was rampant. Students from the community with the high rate of alcoholism often felt obliged to leave school and make the long trip home over dangerous roads to ensure that siblings got adequate provisions when the family received money.

A Native educator from that same community said that such children have difficulty meeting both their responsibilities at home and those at school. "The kids are from alcoholic homes. They have a lot of responsibility at home. They don't trust anybody." Other informants in the community described children from these homes as surly and non-communicative and completely lacking respect for adults including teachers in the school. The Native educator insisted that these children are themselves victims of a disease and educators in the schools must provide understanding and sensitive professional treatment to help them overcome their traumas and prevent the spread of the disease.

While this is certainly a delicate issue, it has a negative impact on a considerable number of Native students, especially those from small northern communities, and to ignore the problem would be to ignore these students. One Native educator described the causes of alcoholism: "No jobs, no recreational places. People have no where to go in the evenings. The traditional ways - hunting and trapping - don't help much with alcoholism. Natives can't cope with the world. They've lost their way of life. But people are becoming more aware of their rights. This will help with sobriety." So while substance abuse does have a direct impact on some Native dropouts, it can also have a larger, indirect effect on Native students' success at school. While the larger dimensions of this problem are social, there are aspects of it that must inevitably be addressed in the educational context. Native students coming from

such situations need a specialized kind of understanding and support. Such students, already burdened by the negative stereotypes often projected onto them, are unlikely to feel comfortable approaching a non-Native principal, teacher, or counsellor about these types of home problems. Hence, the very real need for a counsellor who is also a Native.

The majority of non-Native educators did not think that inability to do class work contributed to the decision to drop out. Native educators, on the other hand, were more likely to think this to be the case for some dropouts. The interviews obtained from both groups of educators made it clear that, with some exceptions, Native students do not drop out because they lack ability to succeed in school. However, with reference to the poor academic performance that often precedes dropping out, they generally held different views.

For the most part, non-Native educators attributed the poor academic performance of Native dropouts to a lack of motivation that was manifested in poor attendance and indifferent work/study habits: "I feel the effort was lacking, the competence was there." Only rarely was there the perception that the school system itself was failing to meet their needs and might play a role in their dropping out. Non-Native educators at various sites remarked at what they perceived as underachievement, even a "fear of success," on the part of many Native students who ended up dropping out.

Native educators were less likely to see an absence of motivation as the explanation for this discrepancy between ability and performance. They perceived a tendency toward underachievement among many Native dropouts. In addition, dropouts were reported as being easily discouraged by failure. Instead of persisting in advanced- and general-level courses despite setbacks, they tended to resolve academic difficulties by dropping a level. This tendency may partly explain the disproportionate number of Native students in basic-level courses. In addition, Native students often start off in lower levels than they are capable of handling as soon as they enter secondary school. Both the students themselves and Native parents are often unaware of the implications of taking only

basic-level courses on a student's postsecondary options. Thus students of average or above average ability often find themselves in unchallenging programs. Even a graduation diploma obtained from completing a majority of basic-level courses may leave the student in a cul-de-sac with few or no options for further education.

Interviews with individual Native students across the province corroborated these reasons for not following a recommendation to study at the advanced level. However, interviews with both non-Native and Native educators indicated that, in some contexts, the expectation projected on them by the schools and/or the students' own communities predisposes them to opt for basic-level courses or packages which appear to offer a work-oriented training rather then considering more academic packages of courses which would permit them to aspire to higher education and/or the professions.

RECOMMENDATION # 6

That students be given explicit instruction in study skills as soon as they enter Grade 9 and given continuous upgrading in study skills appropriate to the demands made upon them as they advance through secondary school.

RECOMMENDATION # 7

That First Nations establish supervised study centres with facilities for students to complete homework assignments.

RECOMMENDATION # 8

That the procedures currently employed by each school to recommend the placement of students in programs of study and levels of study be scrutinized and reassessed.

RECOMMENDATION # 9

That joint strategies be adopted by local education authorities and secondary schools to enrol and maintain more Native students in advanced-level courses and in packages leading to higher education.

3.3 Student-Staff Relationships

They were getting into trouble with teachers and/or the principal.

Their teachers failed to understand them.

Their teachers didn't encourage them to stay on at school.

Teachers seldom praised them or their efforts.

Teachers often picked on them unjustly.

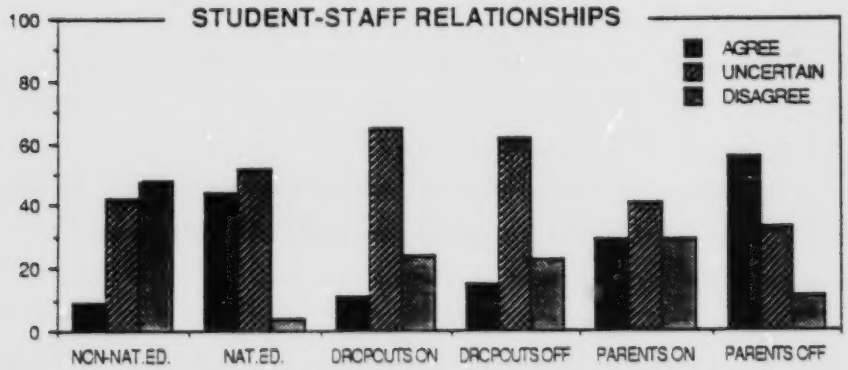


Figure 3

Native and non-Native educators differed on their perceptions of the extent to which these factors contributed to the dropout equation.

The chief cause of trouble between students and staff reported by all interviewees was absenteeism and lateness. While non-Native educators reported that Native dropouts created no more trouble than other dropouts, in many cases persistent truancy set the stage for conflict between students, teachers, and parents. Native educators speculated whether absenteeism is a strategy employed by students to avoid trouble with teachers and school administrators or whether it is, of and by itself, a major cause of trouble. While parents are more likely to perceive students' problems with teachers as the result of discriminatory tendencies towards Native students, most dropouts reported skipping school and classes as the main source of problems in their relationships with teachers and the administration.

Native educators reported that students sometimes got into trouble for using inappropriate language and talking back to teachers. Both groups of educators saw this behaviour in terms of the norms in some Native communities: "Native students don't understand or submit easily to the ... classroom authority relationships. In the band and in the home, individuals are on a more equal or common footing in terms of power. When they are given a directive by the teacher, the students see it as their choice whether or not to observe and follow the request." Another Native educator rejected this cultural difference. He argued that such behaviour is the result of a lack of respect towards all adults and authority figures that is characteristic of children from families which display internal problems.

Again, Native and non-Native educators differed greatly on their perceptions of the effect that a lack of teacher understanding has on Native dropouts. Non-Native educators tended to see the problem in terms of conflicting cultural norms and values. Over and above their function of teaching various content courses, they see the inculcation of the values of the dominant work ethic as their primary goal. To the extent that Native

students fail to come to school, fail to be on time, and fail to do the prescribed work, educators simply throw up their hands in frustration. While there is talk by some Native and non-Native educators of the obvious and overriding need to sensitize teachers to "Native learning styles" or, more reasonably, student-centered learning, the need for teachers to understand students' home and cultural backgrounds, and the need for more programming sensitive to the needs of Native students, these ideas are always expressed in sufficiently vague terms that it is difficult if not impossible for individual teachers to know what concrete action could be taken to meet these needs. Alternatively, it is felt that the educational system has already dealt with those needs that it is capable of addressing; Native language and Native studies courses are in place and local tuition agreements cater for specific needs. There is a widely shared "feeling" on the part of non-Native educators that the reserve and the welfare system are responsible for the lack of commitment to education by parents and students and that this is ultimately the reason why teachers fail to understand Native students. These "feelings" on the part of non-Native educators are seldom backed up by a first-hand knowledge of their Native students' situations outside of the classroom. Few teachers had ever visited the reserves from which their Indian students came, knew or had met their students' parents, knew the dimension or population or administrative and economic structure of the reserves.

Native educators generally felt the onus was on school staff to be more understanding of Native students' family and cultural backgrounds. Many felt that teachers should be aware that some children cannot always leave their family problems at home. They observed that teachers must also recognize that many Native students, especially those from northern, isolated, rural communities, come from a background very different from that of children brought up in regular contact with cities. As a result, these students tend to deal with life at a slower pace, and since time often means little, they are frequently not punctual. Many Native educators noted these students are often shy and reluctant

to speak out in class, a fact that teachers should take into account when preparing class activities and presenting material.

While teacher-turnover was not reported as an obstacle to developing an understanding relationship with students, dropouts reported that teachers, most of whom had been at the school throughout their stay, often treated them in an impersonal way. They claimed that such teachers ignored their questions, appeared not to care about them, or focused exclusively on certain groups of students, i.e., the achievers.

Over half of Native educators thought that teachers' failure to encourage students to stay in school was a factor in Native student dropout, while most non-Native educators did not see this as a factor. Some Native educators believed that potential dropouts received little encouragement to remain in school. Metis and off-reserve dropouts generally disagreed that this was true of their experience, while over half of their parents agreed. Twice as many on-reserve as Metis/off-reserve dropouts agreed that they did not receive encouragement to stay in school. A small number of dropouts reported that school staff had actively encouraged them to drop out. Some non-Native educators explained that after a certain point it was unrealistic to encourage certain students to stay in school when it was clear from their repeated behaviour and attitudes that they had no commitment to work towards success in school. They felt that for some such students, experience of the outside world would either confirm the student's desire to remain out or drive him back to school convinced that the effort required to complete a graduation diploma would be worth it in the long run.

The same pattern emerges with respect to praise: Native educators were much more likely to perceive a lack of praise for Native students as a factor in their decision to drop out. Non-Native educators in the schools felt Native dropouts had received praise when this was warranted. However, parents and Native counsellors tend to be contacted not when the teacher has praise to distribute but when the student has distinguished himself in some negative way. This observation is supported by most Native educators and, in particular, by Metis and off-reserve parents.

Since the majority of all dropouts disagreed that their teachers failed to praise them, it would appear that the negative perception of parents and Native educators is due to their being overloaded with negative messages and simply not being informed when students distinguish themselves positively. It would seem that a mechanism is necessary to communicate more effectively students' accomplishments to parents and guardians.

Those dropouts who reported that teachers picked on them cited, as examples, being asked to read aloud or to go perform a task at the blackboard. One student interpreted a critical remark concerning his sporadic attendance as an instance of injustice. Other than general claims that some teachers were unjust, none of the dropouts offered more convincing or specific examples of unjust treatment.

Non-Native educators did not agree unjust disciplinary practices existed or were a factor, in contrast with Native educators and parents who tended to believe that discriminatory practices in the administration of discipline existed. However, several Native educators believed that Native students were inclined to think that teacher discipline was directed at them because they were Natives rather than because they as students had committed an infraction of the rules. They also noted the tendency of some students to use their identity as Natives as a "cop-out" or as a strategy to get parents on their side in conflicts with school staff.

RECOMMENDATION # 10

That as part of professional development training teachers be given opportunities to become familiar with their Native students' communities, local education authority and in particular the parents of their students.

RECOMMENDATION # 11

That as part of the initial training of both elementary and secondary school teachers, trainees be given the opportunity to intern in both band and federal schools as well as provincial secondary schools with high Native enrolments.

RECOMMENDATION # 12

That a major strategy be urgently planned and adopted to recruit Native graduates into the secondary school teaching profession.

RECOMMENDATION # 13

That a major effort be undertaken to identify Native people who have incomplete undergraduate degrees and to provide an inducement to encourage them to graduate and enter the secondary school profession.

RECOMMENDATION # 14

That a strategy be planned and adopted to encourage Native secondary school teachers to undertake principalship training.

RECOMMENDATION # 15

That affirmative action be taken to increase the numbers of qualified secondary school teachers employed in provincial secondary schools

3.4 Parental Support

Their parents didn't have much interest in how well or badly they did at school.

Their parents didn't encourage them to stay on at school.

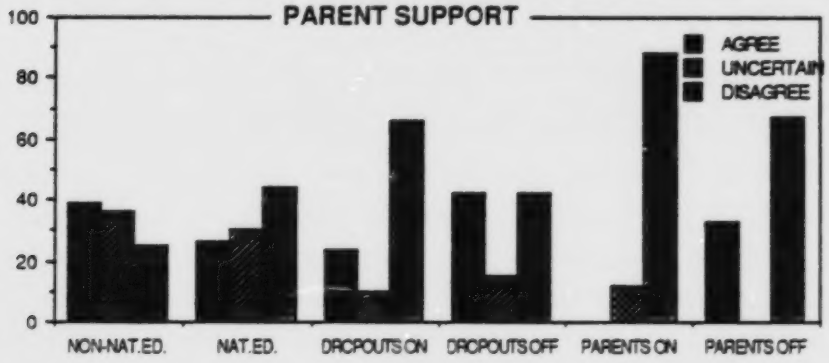


Figure 4

Non-Native educators were either uncertain or thought that the parents of dropouts were lacking interest in their children's education and failed to engender in them an appreciation of the value of education. On the first issue, one indicator that educators use to judge parental interest is the extent to which parents participate in parent/teacher nights organized by the school. By and large, Native parents do not attend these meetings. Both Native and non-Native educators recognized that many parents are uncomfortable coming to school. They cited a number of reasons for this: (1) some parents are unfamiliar with and are intimidated by the educational system, (2) they may view the school as an alien world in which they play no part, and that the formal education of their children is exclusively in the hands of educators, and, finally (3) that their lack of participation reflects a deeply

rooted ambivalence towards the purposes of school education as an institution. This alienation may be further and generally exacerbated by the parents' own negative experiences of school. Educators reported virtually no contact with the natural parents of student boarders and most were uncertain as to the degree of parental support.

Both groups of educators recognized that certain Native dropouts lacked parental support because of the multiplicity of social problems that affect their families. Educators thought that these problems including the difficulties facing single parents, family breakdowns, alcoholism, and financial problems were so pressing that such parents had little time to address the educational needs of their children. All of the educators thought that the degree of parental support was a critical variable affecting students' school performance and their decision to stay in school: "In homes where graduation and education is stressed and valued by parents, kids graduate; otherwise they rarely do" (Educator).

Native and non-Native educators suggested that the parents of many dropouts either lack the "know how" to motivate their children or else they believe that the decision to stay at school rightly belongs with the child who is undergoing the experience. Again, educators return to the ambivalence towards provincial education exhibited by some Native groups. "How," they ask, "can parents effectively encourage their children to achieve educational goals that they themselves view with mixed feelings?" Some Native educators reported that the educational success of their children may pose a threat. They may fear that they will "lose" their children both metaphorically and literally; education will result in a severing of emotional and cultural ties with their children and may eventually lead them to leave the reserve or community for attractive employment opportunities elsewhere. These fears are perceived to be greatest among the more isolated northerly communities where there are fewer links between white and Native society.

Finally, more than twice as many Metis and off-reserve dropouts in comparison to on-reserve Natives agreed that parental support was lacking. Further, a far greater percentage of Metis and off-reserve parents agreed that their children received less parental support than did on-reserve parents. This finding adds support to the finding discussed in section 5 that Metis/off-reserve students are more at risk than on-reserve students due to family related problems.

RECOMMENDATION # 16

That the Ministry of Education of Ontario on the basis of input from First Nations, Metis/off-reserve agencies and provincial school boards and secondary schools prepare guideline packages (preferably including video material) addressing the issue of the kinds of home support which can help promote the academic success of Native students.

RECOMMENDATION # 17

That the Ministry of Education of Ontario prepare guideline packages (preferably including video material) explaining crucial aspects of the provincial school system such as the role of the elementary school, secondary school, parents and the students themselves in the selection of secondary school courses, levels of study and how the selection of courses and levels can affect future choices.

3.5 Home-School Communication

The parents and the teachers of Native students didn't talk to each other enough.

There was too little communication between the school and their home communities.

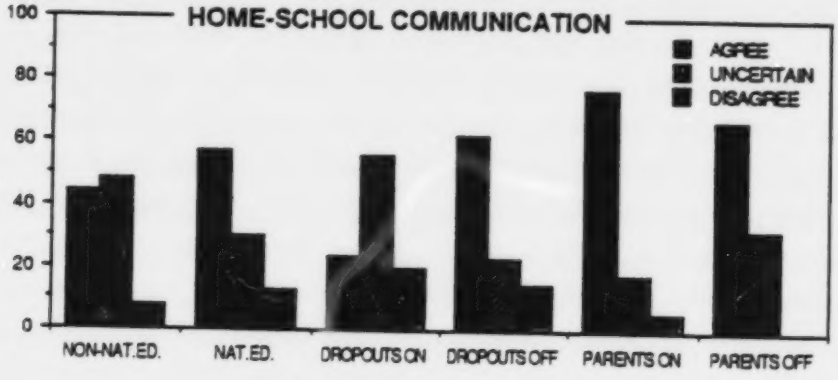


Figure 5

The majority of all respondents - Native and non-Native educators, dropouts and parents both on- and off-reserve - believed that home-school communication was lacking in both quantity and quality. In addition to the cultural and psychological barriers discussed above, Native and non-Native educators perceived physical barriers. The problem of geographic distance not only exists in an extreme form for parents of students from isolated northern "fly-in" communities but it is also very real for Native parents without their own transport who live in communities that are some distance from the towns where most secondary schools are located. From the schools' point of view, day to day communication is further limited because many Native homes do not have telephones. Parents also reported that their children did not always deliver memos and notes and other written communications. Some parents reported that even when these communications were brought home they couldn't always read and understand them.

There is also the issue of the "psychic distance" of the reserve, from the point of view of many if not most non-Native educators. They may have dealt with Native students for many years without ever having had a particular reason to visit the reserve from which they come. For non-Native educators, the reserve, its history, dimensions, reasons for existing, pattern of life of its inhabitants, its internal structure and its relationship to the rest of Canadian society is a virtual unknown. Some non-Native

educators were also puzzled to know who might be an authoritative figure to contact on a reserve and how that contact might most appropriately be made and with what expectation of success.

Native educators observe that the quality of parent and school staff communication that does occur despite all the obstacles is usually unsatisfactory in that it is often initiated by the school and almost invariably involves problems and negative issues. Parents are summoned and the interaction tends to be unidirectional: the school tells the parent what is wrong and what must be done to correct the situation. Parents understandably tend to avoid such situations or approach them in a confrontational manner. Parents complain that they never hear from the school when their child is doing well. Thus, there is often little basis for mutual trust, respect and understanding in parent-teacher communication. Negative encounters between parents and school staff tend only to reinforce the negative opinions that they mutually hold for one another.

Poor school-community communication is also reported as contributing to high dropout rates. Most educators, Native and non-Native talked of this factor in conjunction with Indian bands rather than Metis/off-reserve Natives. One reason for this is that the vast majority of bands have reserves and a central administrative structure whereas the "community" for Metis/off-reserve Natives is likely to be more elusive and does not usually possess a formal administrative structure with which the school can identify as a channel for potential communications. In some communities, however, the education worker in the Native Friendship Centres and the social/education counsellor in the Youth Employment Training (YET) Centre (or local variation of such) have undertaken a communication link between Metis off-reserve Natives and the school. However, this role tends to be sporadic and dependent upon the personalities of the persons concerned rather than a reliable channel upon which schools or Metis/off-reserve communities can count.

Native and non-Native educators frequently expressed limited satisfaction or open dissatisfaction with school-band

communication. Some Native educators felt that the school assumed that they were the natural channel for all communication with on-reserve students and the reserve in general. Schools did not fully appreciate their problems - the difficulty in contacting some parents and the problems that could arise in trying to be an effective intermediary between schools and the various committees and decision-making bodies on reserves with which they might have very limited influence or from which they, in some cases, receive little or no assistance.

When educators refer to successful communication between the school and the Native community, they are invariably referring to a reserve community. In communities with a high number of Metis and off-reserve families, educators are likely to say that there isn't a Native home community as such - Native families live in town or in a certain section of town or in an out-lying settlement. Not only are such "communities" lacking recognizable geographical boundaries, their leadership, if it exists, is often unknown to school authorities.

Clear channels for successful school-community communication is reported by Native and non-Native educators as forming the basis for positive parent-teacher communication. Poor home-school communication is seen as the result of a lack of will on the part of either the school or the Native community or both simultaneously. Without good will and genuine committment on both sides it is unlikely that such contacts will prove beneficial.

RECOMMENDATION # 18

That each First Nation establish a Local Education Authority (LEA) with the capacity, authority and responsibility to negotiate, manage and administer all aspects of First Nation education and agreements with provincial school boards to provide secondary education for its children.

RECOMMENDATION # 19

That each LEA, where it wishes to purchase secondary education services, negotiate, manage and monitor a binding agreement with a provincial school board to provide education for its children. Such agreements should include agreed upon aims, attendance policies, disciplinary policies, policies regarding the qualifications of teachers assigned to give instruction in Native languages and culture, etc.

RECOMMENDATION # 20

That Section 165 of the Ontario Education Act be amended to remove the stipulation in 165(1)(b) that leaves representation of First Nations that do not have minimum numbers of students to the discretion of provincial boards. Tuition agreements between Local Education Authorities or their equivalents and provincial boards should include a requirement for representation from Native people.

RECOMMENDATION # 21

That appropriate Metis/off-reserve representative agencies, e.g. Native Friendship Centres, YET Centres now under the auspices of Native women associates liaise with provincial secondary schools on behalf of Metis/off-reserve students.

RECOMMENDATION # 22

That provision be made for the timely enrolment of students from distant communities in host secondary schools and for parents to accompany their children to their new accommodation and new school and to meet face to face the personnel who will care for and teach their children while they are living away from home.

RECOMMENDATION # 23

That resources also be in place to permit parents from distant communities to attend graduation ceremonies.

RECOMMENDATION # 24

That student support services be available for students from distant communities and that these services include a parent communication service capable of interacting with parents in the latter's first language.

3.6 Peer Relationships

Many of their friends had already dropped out.

They had few or no friends at school.

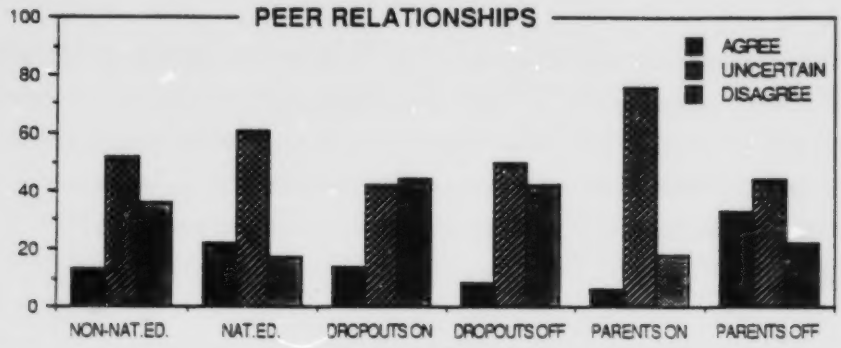


Figure 6

More than half of all respondents agreed either that dropouts tended to have friends who had already left or that they believed this to have contributed to their eventual withdrawal. However, relatively few respondents agreed that dropouts lacked friends at school or that lacking friends was an important contributing factor in dropping out.

The interview data support the finding that few dropouts were without friends at school, but those who did report that they lacked friends often said it was because their close friends had already dropped out. No one reported discrimination as a reason for being without friends. In some areas, Native and non-Native educators observed a more or less strong tendency for on-reserve Native students and non-Native students to form exclusive groups with little interaction.

It appears that on-reserve dropouts, and especially "fly-in" youth, are more influenced by friends who drop out than are Metis and off-reserve dropouts. The sense of group solidarity among Native youth who come from the same reserve was often referred to. Furthermore, it may be that Metis and off-reserve Natives learn by necessity to interact more easily with non-Native students since they do not have the distinct geographical location of a reserve to set them apart. Metis/off-reserve Native students talked about

"being looked down on" by on-reserve Indians and being called "backyard Indians".

Student boarders, the majority of whom are from distant reserves, are most deeply affected by friends who leave school. Educators commented that it was almost predictable that these students who find themselves in an unfamiliar environment and culture at 12 or 13 years of age and cut off from their parents for the first time in their lives would tend to group together. Equally understandable would be the group decision to go home and not return at the first available opportunity. However, Native educators pointed out the equally negative consequences of the practice of placing student boarders from the same community in different homes and schools where the mutual support that they could provide one another is unavailable.

Educators view the influence of peers as salient in two ways. Since potential Native dropouts often have tenuous ties to the school community and what ties they do have may be little more than social, there is little reason for such students to stay in school after their friends leave. Second, educators observed that dropouts are drawn to behaviour such as skipping classes, truancy and substance abuse through the influence of peers. The influence of peers, therefore, is twofold: it can be instrumental in putting students at risk and can also provide the final impetus for potential dropouts to become "de facto" dropouts.

RECOMMENDATION # 25

That LEAs, Metis/off-reserve organizations and provincial secondary schools encourage the formation of Native student clubs whose functions include Native student peer support and raising the pride and image of the Native student population among staff and students in the school.

3.7 Future Plans

They did not expect to finish high school.

They did not care whether they finished high school or not.

They did not have any clear plans about what they would do after leaving school.

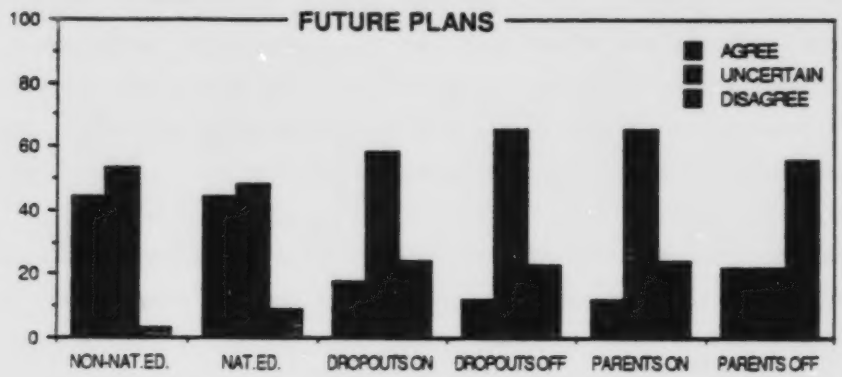


Figure 7

Native and non-Native educators reported that most dropouts both expected to graduate and cared about finishing school. They felt, however, that these expectations and the desire to graduate were often at odds with the students' patterns of attendance, record of homework completion, and day to day behaviour at school. In the eyes of many educators, Native dropouts appeared to have difficulty in connecting the short-term tasks and goals involved with course work with the larger task and more distant goal of obtaining a graduation diploma, especially a diploma appropriate to the realization of career goals.

Both groups of educators reported that the low expectations many dropouts have of themselves and for their futures in general have the effect of diminishing their expectations of graduating. They felt that several negative factors were at work here: the dropouts poor self-esteem; low expectations for themselves from the educational system, from their communities and from their families; the lack of positive Native role models; and, most important, a feeling that their communities lack many of the employment opportunities that would make the struggle and sacrifices to graduate worthwhile. Others attributed low expectations to the Native students' tendencies to fulfil the

negative stereotypes projected on Native people by society in general and students and staff in particular.

Few of the dropouts who commented on this item claimed that they expected to graduate. Their expectations diminish because they are absent from classes, receive poor grades, fail to do homework, lack support in the home environment and see their friends drop out. Apparently, external expectations from the home, the community, and people in the schools are insufficient to act against the diminishing expectations many Native dropouts have of themselves as they encounter failure year by year.

Many educators, Native and non-Native, thought that the degree to which Native students care about graduating was connected to the clarity of their career goals. Students who lack career goals or want to pursue traditional economic activities feel that they have little need for a diploma and therefore care less about procuring it.

Many of the remarks informants made with regard to future plans focused on the extent to which Native dropouts had clear plans concerning what they would do after leaving school. There was a high degree of agreement between Native and non-Native educators that Native dropouts lacked clear plans. In fact, many educators felt that a large number of dropouts lacked any kind of practicable future plans at all. Generally, these educators thought that the main reasons for this dearth of planning could be attributed to cultural factors, lack of role models, and to a lack of career counselling in both elementary and secondary schools.

One Native counsellor reported that many Native parents, unlike most non-Native parents, do not encourage their children to role-play various occupations or professions. Non-Native children from an early age learn that they are expected to be something and that "something" is usually explicitly presented as an occupation. For these children, completion of secondary school becomes a necessary step to an apprenticeship, a college diploma, or a professional degree. The expectation to <u>be</u> something according to that Native educator is not an important part of Native values.

Some educators thought the lack of plans exhibited by many dropouts was connected to a lack of positive role models in the community. Other educators thought that dropouts were unable to see beyond a lifestyle of seasonal work or welfare if that were not an uncommon pattern in the particular communities in which they lived.

RECOMMENDATION # 26

That Native students from their presecondary days have regular information from and access to qualified career and education counsellors who are thoroughly familiar with the communities whose children they council.

RECOMMENDATION # 27

That provision be made for Native role model programs, both live and on videocassette, to be permanently available and continually expanded upon, for the use of provincial secondary schools.

3.8 Discrimination

Non-Native students made them feel unwelcome at school.
They were discriminated against by others in the school.

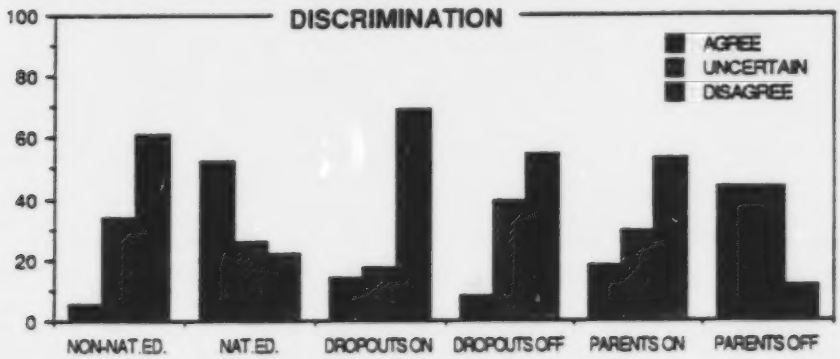


Figure 8

Both the survey data and the interview data indicate that discrimination is far more common in northern communities than it is in the south. Non-Native educators in the southern regions said it appeared to be on the decline, but Native and non-Native educators in the north agreed that it was an important reason for Native students to quit school. Native educators in the south reported that some Native students might occasionally make unwarranted charges of discrimination as an excuse when they may have been at fault in situations that warranted a reprimand.

Northern educators in some communities report that Native students are sometimes subjected to physical and verbal abuse from non-Native students, that Native students tend to cluster together and that some non-Native students may make little effort to welcome and include them into their groups. Some Metis/off-reserve students reported discrimination from both non-Native students and on-reserve Native students.

RECOMMENDATION # 28

That the LEAs and provincial secondary schools develop an active policy to promote mutual understanding and respect between the Native and non-Native communities both in school and in the community at large by providing visits to Native communities by teachers and whole classes from provincial schools and by providing visits by LEA members, Metis/off-reserve organizations and agencies, and Native parents to provincial secondary schools.

3.9 Curriculum

Most of the subjects taught in school didn't interest them.
They felt that school was of little importance to their life.
Many of their teachers were unable to engage their interest and participation.
Much of the work done in class was pointless.

They had to study courses that had little to do with their lives outside of school.

There were no courses of specific cultural relevance to them as Native people.

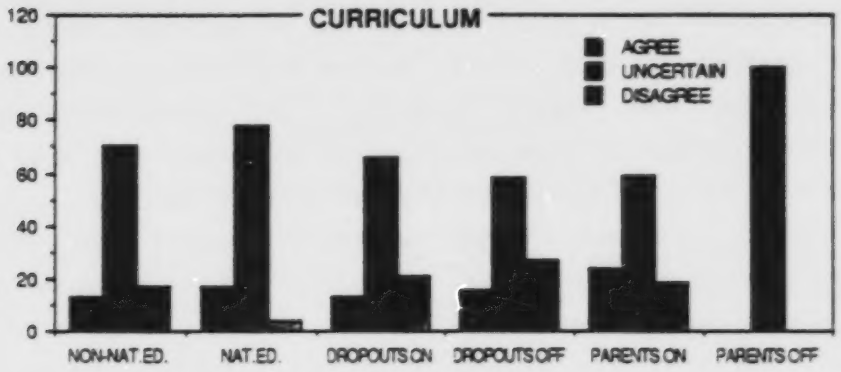


Figure 9

Native and non-Native educators reported that dropouts tended to be interested in one or two subjects which they thought relevant, but that they were uninterested in many subjects especially those which had no clearly perceived practical application in their daily lives. They also reported success with co-op programs where courses are linked to work training experiences. Few dropouts were reported among those Native students taking the more theoretical and demanding courses required for college or university entrance.

Dropouts themselves did not always report lack of interest in the subjects per se. Many found the presentation of course material boring. One dropout avoided history because of the unfair portrayal of Natives. Others found their classes uninteresting because they had selected general- or basic-level courses as a strategy for getting through high school with the minimum of effort. However, in general, dropouts confirm the educators' observation that they prefer courses of practical value and that compulsory courses which they see as having little utility contribute to their dropping out.

More than half of both groups of educators agreed that students who believed that school had little to do with their lives were likely to drop out. Many dropouts, they observe, fail to see the diploma as an instrument capable of opening up opportunities.

Many dropouts who intend to live on a reserve or pursue a lifestyle not involving wage-employment are reported to feel that education beyond the age of 16 is superfluous. If Native students don't envisage for themselves careers that require a Grade 12 education, they tend not to see the relevance of secondary school education to their lives at all.

Non-Native educators were evenly divided on whether the absence of courses of particular relevance to Native students contributed to dropping out. Most of those who disagreed that it was a contributing factor were from schools that had offered courses in Native Studies or languages. A few reported a lack of registration in these courses on the part of Native students and in some cases the courses had been dropped.

Some dropouts said that they rejected courses in Native studies either because the perspective adopted, the content, or the teachers did not live up to their expectations. One dropout dismissed one such course as "just another history course for white kids."

Although considerably more Native educators agreed that the lack of culturally relevant courses was a factor, they too offered mixed views. In some cases, they reported that students viewed courses in Native culture and languages as "just another course they would have to take." On the other hand, some educators confirmed the dropouts' view that in some schools courses are taught by non-Natives with no specific training and little understanding or sympathy with the Native perspective. Hence, they became simply a cursory history of North American Native people from a somewhat novel perspective that did little to help Native students understand their background or the issues that face them as a people today.

The role and place of Native languages and culture in the school curriculum is a complex issue. Although the data do not indicate that the presence of courses in Native language and culture would necessarily keep a high risk student in school, they suggest that the presence of Native content in the curriculum would have a positive long-term effect on such factors as parental

support, community involvement, and non-Native understanding of Native people.

RECOMMENDATION # 29

That the Ministry of Education of Ontario establish an information clearing house for teaching materials and other resources prepared for Native language and culture courses in provincial secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATION # 30

That special one-credit French as a second language courses be made available in secondary schools for Native students who have studied or are studying a Native language.

RECOMMENDATION # 31

That Native languages be offered in provincial secondary schools for credit at the three levels, basic, general and advanced where there is appropriate demand.

RECOMMENDATION # 32

That a Native perspective in school instruction not be restricted to unitary, self-contained courses on Native language and culture but inform other courses and components of the curriculum in general.

RECOMMENDATION # 33

That the appropriateness of the experience and qualifications of teachers of courses dealing with Native studies form part of the tuition agreement between LEAs and school boards.

3.10 Attendance

They skipped school and classes quite a lot.

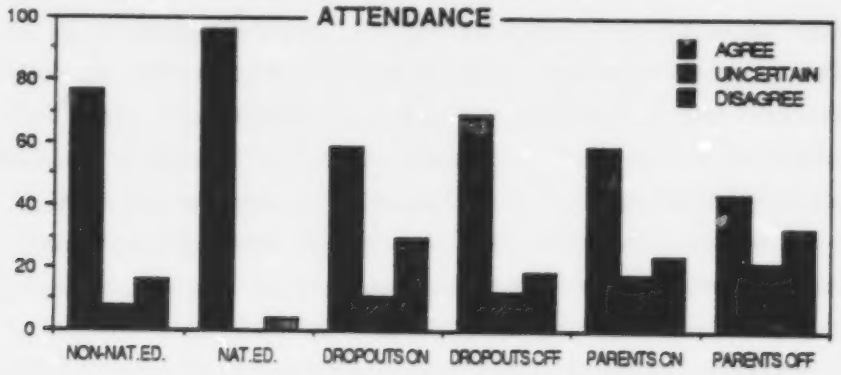


Figure 10

Educators, Native even more so than non-Native, agreed that this is the variable most clearly associated with dropping out. Several reasons were offered as to why students skipped classes and these were supported in our interviews with dropouts. Some students simply find school boring, uninteresting and irrelevant to their lives. Activities at home or in the community and being with friends are more satisfying, so they choose to miss a class, or the entire day. Other students skip classes to avoid a particular teacher or course that they dislike. Students also were absent because they did not do homework or were too shy to make a presentation in class. Others reported missing school because of problems and responsibilities at home. Some students failed to get up on time and missed the bus. This was often the case in homes where there were substance abuse problems.

Educators perceived a process that compounds itself as time goes on. One Native educator likened it to a snowball. "It's like a

snowball. You're skipping out because you're not doing well, and you're not doing well because you're skipping out. And finally you don't know where it ends because you don't know where it starts." Whatever the reasons behind absenteeism, and it is by no means the case that students skip school because they are not doing well, what is certain is that persistent absenteeism always results in students facing almost insurmountable problems with their school work and often results in the loss of the concern, support and respect of their teachers and counsellors.

Educators observed that the habit of missing school can develop as early as elementary school. Pupils remain home because of family problems and attitudes of indifference towards the importance of education. Educators attributed many of the deficiencies in the basic academic skills of secondary dropouts to the fact that they were persistently absent during their first years of school. The attitudes of some parents towards truancy can be very laissez-faire and both Native and non-Native educators often report encountering indifference or sometimes hostility when they approach parents with the problem of their children's absenteeism.

Without the active support of parents in the search for a solution to chronic absenteeism, Native and non-Native educators can find themselves at a loss as to how to keep these students in school. School policy may prescribe suspension for students who skip or are truant. A policy such as this plays into the hands of students who don't want to be at school.

Suspensions obviously add momentum to the snowballing effect already discussed, but they have another serious impact. In many school boards there is a policy that if a student misses a certain number of days (usually between 15 to 20), that student does not receive credit regardless of marks in tests, assignments, and exams. Since days under suspension are counted as absences, a student who regularly skips has little chance of receiving credit for the course work that was done between voluntary and enforced absences.

In many communities, the school attendance counsellor encounters indifference or hostility when approaching parents or guardians. In some cases, parents cannot be reached because they are without telephones or they live great distances from the school or are unable to speak English. Educators reported that the most effective way of addressing the problem is through a band educational counsellor or, in the case of Metis and off-reserve communities, through Friendship Centres, Youth Employment Centres or a Native counsellor or liaison person who has been hired by the school board. Educators also reported that some Native communities offered attendance awards. While this was not seen to have an immediate effect on chronic truants, educators felt it was a positive step in emphasizing the importance of attendance and changing the attitude in the community.

In some communities, the band administration disburses pocket money as an attendance incentive. The amount of this money is calculated on the basis of the days the students attended school with a sum deducted for days or classes absent. The Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario offers a similar program for needy Metis and off-reserve students. Many schools claim to be unfamiliar with this program. A Native educator credits this program as one factor which stabilized the school lives of several Metis and off-reserve students. Non-Native educators have mixed feelings about such programs, but it is clear that they have the effect of demonstrating to high risk students the degree to which Native and non-Native educators consider regular attendance as important.

RECOMMENDATION # 34

That LEA's representative, Metis/off-reserve agencies and school boards agree upon a secondary school policy covering truancy, attendance, homework load, and homework completion

requirements and that this policy form part of the tuition agreement.

3.11 Counselling

They didn't have a guidance counsellor with whom they could feel really comfortable.

They didn't have a professional guidance counsellor, just a regular teacher who also did some counselling.

They got insufficient career counselling in the school.

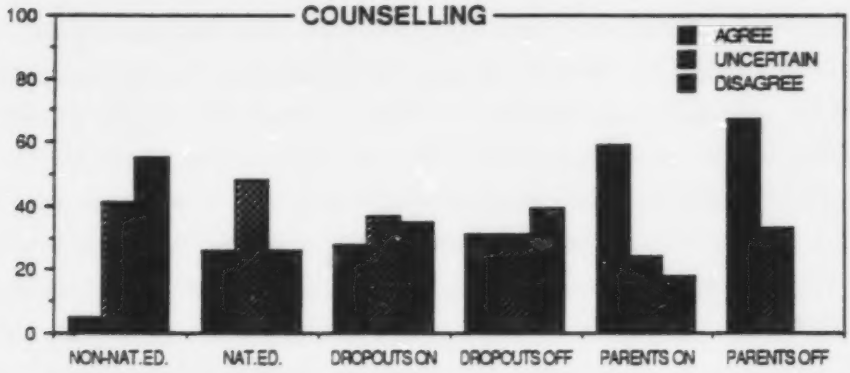


Figure 11

Very few educators thought the lack of a professional counsellor was a factor. This was because most schools contacted had a guidance counsellor or even a counselling department. However, a considerable number of parents and dropouts indicated that they did not have a professional counsellor or that they didn't have contact with one. Many of the dropouts interviewed appeared not to know how to obtain academic counselling. Our data also indicate that Native students are consistently "placed" willingly and unwillingly in general and basic levels. While this may be appropriate for some, others are being underestimated or underestimating themselves and are having their poor self-image confirmed by school staff who are either biased in their assessment of Native students' abilities, untrained or overworked. The tendency of Native dropouts to be underachievers, and as such to decline academic challenges, combined with their parents' lack of familiarity with and understanding of the complexities of the

school system makes it all the more imperative that Native students receive personal and empathetic academic counselling.

Native educators were almost twice as likely (as non-Native educators) to agree that the school didn't have a counsellor that Native dropouts felt comfortable with and that this factor contributed to dropping out. Native educators reported that most schools employed a professionally trained counsellor. However, many doubted whether students really felt at ease with the counsellors available to them. Even Native counsellors themselves, especially those from reserves other than those where their students resided, reported difficulties in getting students to feel comfortable approaching them. It took time and patience, particularly but not only with student boarders from the far north.

Educators from both groups felt that non-Native counsellors who had no first hand experience of the living conditions and the social, economic and cultural background from which Native students came were unlikely to put students at ease. Similarly, both groups felt that Native counsellors who had an inadequate training and only a partial grasp of the complexities of the educational system would not serve the interests of Native students and their parents well.

Native and non-Native counsellors observed that Native students were often uncomfortable with the counselling situation if conducted one on one. They reported success with peer counselling and the creation of situations where the purpose of the session is disguised by an activity such as card-playing. The role and function of a counsellor may be foreign to some students' experience and they may require special attention in elementary grades in order to avail themselves of counselling services throughout their schooling.

There was almost universal agreement that insufficient career counselling was available, and that this, along with a lack of specific career plans, had a significant effect on Native students' rate of school completion. It is clear from the discussion concerning future plans (3.7) why this might be so, and also the great need high risk students have for effective career

counselling. Educators observed that the greatest problems in delivering effective career counselling are its late introduction (secondary school usually) and insufficient and inadequately trained resource personnel who have no first-hand knowledge of the aspirations of Native communities. Native counsellors from some bands reported that they were overburdened in trying to cope with the personal and academic counselling of students living on the reserve as well as Metis and off-reserve Natives who also approached them for services. Metis and off-reserve parents as a group were most in agreement that their children lacked empathetic and effective counselling. Youth Employment Training Centres and Friendship Centres felt that they were left "to pick up the pieces" when the school career counselling system failed Metis and off-reserve students.

RECOMMENDATION # 35

That a major strategy be urgently planned and adopted to recruit Native graduates into the education and social counselling profession.

RECOMMENDATION # 36

That affirmative action be taken to increase the numbers of professional counsellors of Native origin employed by provincial school boards and secondary schools.

3.12 Other Factors

We investigated a number of other factors that are generally accepted as being pertinent to the dropout equation.

3.12.1 Living in Boarding Homes

They had to live away from home (in a boarding home or a dormitory).

This factor particularly involved Native students who were required to stay in boarding homes in order to attend secondary school. The issue of boarding arose almost exclusively in the northern region where students are sent to cities and towns after completing elementary school or, in some cases, junior high school in their own communities. These communities are often only accessible only by air, or in some cases, by railway, or after a lengthy road journey.

In addition to the linguistic, academic and cultural problems which we have already discussed, these students from "fly-in" communities encounter a host of other difficulties that are directly connected to the boarding home situation and that decrease their chances of completing secondary school. Native and non-Native educators reported that the greatest factor affecting student boarders who drop out is simple homesickness. Not only do they pine for family and friends, they also long for their accustomed food and lifestyle. Most educators talked of the serious risks associated with requiring young adolescents to leave the comparative security of their small homogeneous communities to undertake secondary education in an alien environment far from the support of their families.

At this age, many of these students are not ready emotionally to be away from family and friends. Native educators report that these students are most frequently in danger of dropping out in Grade 9 or 10 although many will make another attempt at resuming their schooling when they are a year or two older. Students who had dropped out previously from boarding situations and who are now studying in their community schools which have been extended to Grade 10 expressed great satisfaction with the new arrangement and felt they would be better prepared to complete their senior years in the city.

Although many boarding parents do the best they can to care for their northern charges, some take on boarders solely for

mercenary reasons. Educators reported that some Native students are fed a poor diet of pasta, hot dogs and indifference. Native boarding parents, who might be more knowledgeable and sympathetic caretakers, are reportedly difficult to find. Although some dropouts said that their boarding parents offered them support and encouragement, others reported that they received inadequate physical and emotional nourishment and little academic and social supervision.

Both educators and dropouts referred to unmediated culture shock as contributing to the likelihood of these students dropping out. Northern students encounter an overwhelming variety of new experiences which may, in some cases, either frighten, distract or attract them. Educators reported that many student boarders were negatively affected by their new environment and found it extremely difficult to adapt and, at the same time, to respond to the increased academic demands of secondary school. These adolescents were also undergoing the changes of puberty with all its accompanying difficulties.

Dropouts in boarding homes reported a number of social problems. Many said they were shy and found it difficult to get to know local students. In some cases, they only had contact with students from their home communities. Educators reported that this situation often resulted in a "domino effect" whereby the decision of one student to return home precipitated a mass departure. Not only were student boarders usually isolated from other students, they were, in some cases, mistreated by local Native students who often taunted them with being backward "bush Indians". In their efforts to be accepted by local students, some student boarders developed such behaviour as skipping, hanging out at amusement centres, drinking, drug-taking and staying out late at night.

Educators reported that student boarders suffered financially because many parents were unable to supplement their $10.00 per month allowance and most lacked the skills or confidence to seek part-time work. These students were therefore often lacking what they saw as necessary spending money and sometimes engaged in petty theft to obtain goods or cash.

While many bands and secondary schools have special programs to supervise and assist boarding students socially and academically, others do not and the maintenance or even the existence of such programs is not guaranteed. Educators praised the efforts of the Friendship Centres and local First Nations, who in many areas voluntarily offer counselling services and other concrete support to student boarders. While some northern bands have organized group homes or have a full-time educational counsellor working with their children, others do not. Metis and off-reserve students who often come from identical situations receive whatever support is offered by their home school boards and the host board. The financial assistance offered by the Women Teachers' Federation is not widely known and, consequently, not many Metis and off-reserve students know how to obtain it.

Faced with loneliness, homesickness and an alien environment, these students often abandon an education which they feel will be of little use to them in their home communities. One educator commented: "I understand why they leave, the better question is, why do some of them stay?"

RECOMMENDATION # 37

That schools in isolated communities offer as many courses and programs as possible up to and including the Grade 10 level so that students may remain in their home communities until they are more capable of coping with attending school away from home.

RECOMMENDATION # 38

That more group homes be established for and appropriately near to students from isolated communities whose schools do not

include complete 9 - 13 secondary programs, and that these and other types of accommodation arrangements include provision for

- a Native guidance/social counsellor
- tutoring assistance in the home
- a code of behaviour
- a recreation program
- information and assistance that encourages students to become involved in community programs.

3.12.2 School Size

School seemed to be too big and impersonal for them.

The size of a school was perceived as having an impact on some dropouts, particularly among those who had left small northern communities to attend large composite high schools in larger centres. For some of these students, the school itself contained more people than their home community and they found difficulty relating to such large and to them impersonal institutions on a daily basis. Educators pointed to the importance of effective orientation programs and sympathetic Native counsellors to help these students to adjust.

3.12.3 School Rules

There were too many school rules that they couldn't see the point of.

While non-Native educators did not think that an inability to comprehend school rules was a factor, Native educators were more likely to think this was the case. Punctuality was most often cited as a rule with which dropouts had problems complying. This was particularly true of dropouts from the northern communities where punctuality may not be given much emphasis. These students also had problems with school rules, not because they deliberately sought to create problems, but because there appeared to be few rules in their home communities and they were unaccustomed to institutional rules. Educators observed that there was a need to help Native students understand the rules and why it is necessary that they are respected by everyone. It is also revealing that Metis and off-reserve dropouts and parents were more likely to find school rules

difficult to comprehend than were their on-reserve counterparts. This is largely due to the fact that the Metis and off-reserve community does not have educational counsellors to mediate difficulties that arise between the school and the home. Without the help of such a person, these parents often believe that the rules are discriminatory and that punishments are degrading and unfair.

3.12.4 Participation in Extra-curricular Activities

Although lack of participation in extra-curricular activities was not perceived as an actively contributing factor to dropping out, almost all educators in the schools felt that participation improved a student's chances of remaining in school by increasing his or her range of contacts and interests. They also observed that Native dropouts rarely got involved in after-school activities or clubs.

Several reasons for Native students' reluctance to participate were offered by educators, parents and dropouts. In some cases there was no provision for late busses to take students home after sports, etc., in other instances parents could not afford athletic equipment or the cost of travel. One Native counsellor suggested that Native students had unrealistically high expectations placed on them in the area of athletics and therefore, those who had poor or mediocre ability were overlooked or chose not to compete. Many were perceived as either lacking socialization skills or being too shy to get involved. Finally, northern student boarders were largely unfamiliar with organized sports and were reported as being reluctant to undress in locker rooms.

3.12.5 Travelling Time

They had to bus for quite a long time to and from school.

Travelling a long time to and from school can make the school day so long that students are reluctant or too tired to do homework. In homes where there are alcohol problems or indifference to education, students are liable to miss the bus thereby being late or, in distant communities, missing the entire day.

3.12.6 Early Marriage, Pregnancy

They left school to get married and/or have a baby.

While early marriage was not perceived as contributing to dropping out, educators, especially Native educators, thought that pregnancy was a serious obstacle to staying in school. Parents and dropouts reported that little support was given young women who tried to continue their schooling after becoming pregnant. However, it was suggested by a number of educators that some girls who are unhappy with school life may get pregnant in order to leave school.

3.12.7 Attitude of the School

The school didn't really care about Native students.

Non-Native educators disagreed that the school projected an image of an institution lacking in care for its Native students. Native respondents across the board tended to hold a different view and believed that the negative message projected by many schools was instrumental in encouraging some students to drop out. Although many school boards have made efforts to introduce programming especially aimed at Native students and are making attempts to hire Native counsellors and teachers, there is some doubt on the part of non-Native educators concerning the extent that schools can provide special services in areas where Native students are small in number. The special needs of Metis and off-reserve Natives are often ignored because their community is largely unrecognized.

3.12.8 Financial Problems

They left school because of financial problems at home.

Metis and off-reserve dropouts were much more likely than on-reserve dropouts to agree that they left school because of financial hardships in the home. Most economically disadvantaged students reported themselves or were reported by others as dropping out to earn their own money to obtain things they wanted rather than needed such as clothes and other consumer items. Some educators pointed out, however, that the possession of certain styles or particular items of clothing may play a very important part in students "fitting in" with their peer group and so these "desires" may play a more crucial role in students' lives than might be generally thought.

Native and non-Native educators reported that financial considerations are often an incentive for Native students to remain in school. In some on-reserve communities students are given attendance incentives in the form of cash.

RECOMMENDATION # 39

That a province-wide evaluation be undertaken of the financial incentive scheme offered to non-status Native students by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and consideration given to ways in which the goals of this initiative could be even more completely achieved and support offered for its expansion possibly with the cooperation of Native Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women's Association as well as the schools.

3.12.9 Welfare

They left school in order to go on welfare.

There was virtually no positive support for this statement from any of the sources. With regard to leaving school in order to go on welfare, it is often the reverse that is true: students on welfare must continue their schooling to receive welfare. While there were virtually no reports of Native students leaving school for the purpose of getting welfare, many respondents regarded welfare assistance as an inevitable eventual outcome of dropping out. Since dropouts have few marketable skills in communities where work is available and welfare is often the norm in communities with few or no job opportunities. At this point, the services of the Friendship Centres are virtually the only lifebelt which can rescue many dropouts from a self-perpetuating existence of idleness, ignorance, poverty and hopelessness.

SECTION 4

THE IDENTIFICATION OF "AT-RISK" STUDENTS IN PROVINCIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

4.1 Review of Questionnaire Used and Procedures Adopted for its Administration

The "DECISIONS" questionnaire (Appendix 9) is an instrument which has been in use in Ontario for several years and used successfully to identify, as early as possible, secondary school students who are at risk of dropping out of school (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High Schools, in press). It is composed of 36 multiple-choice questions divided into 6 factors that have been shown to influence students to leave school early. These factors are:

1. Family Environment
   (which includes, e.g., whether the child lives with both parents, one parent or with others; level of education of parents, parents' employment, family financial situation, joint family activities, satisfaction with home life)
2. Personal Traits
   (which includes feelings of confidence, isolation, happiness, being misunderstood, etc.)
3. Educational Plans
   (which includes educational aspirations, intentions, desire to finish/quit school, etc.)
4. School Achievement
   (which includes past academic performance, satisfaction with grades obtained, confidence in own abilities, ability to concentrate, etc.)
5. Teacher-Student Relationship
   (which includes student's perceptions of teachers' ability to empathize, understand, encourage, etc.)
6. Motivation for School
   (which includes extent to which school in general and subjects in particular are liked, to what extent student skips school, classes, etc.)

A student not identified as experiencing problems with any of the factors in the "DECISIONS" questionnaire is regarded as being not at risk. A student identified as experiencing problems with one or more of the factors is regarded as being at risk of dropping out of secondary school prior to completion.

Specific counselling strategies or other types of intervention are recommended for each student who has been identified as being at risk of dropping out, depending upon the particular factors with which the student is experiencing difficulty.

The questionnaire was administered to Grade 9 students in two large provincial secondary schools in both the northern and southern regions of the province. These schools were selected because they were known to have a high enrolment of both on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve Native students.

4.2 The General Picture

	Surveyed		Identified	
	n	%	n	%
Total	206	-	115	56%

Table 8 Numbers and Percentage of Native Students Surveyed and Identified as Being at Risk

Generally speaking, there is a very high percentage of Native students identified as being at risk of dropping out. These high percentages are parallelled by results obtained from general population students (i.e., mainly non-Native) in only a few vocational secondary schools in the southern portion of the province (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High Schools, in press).

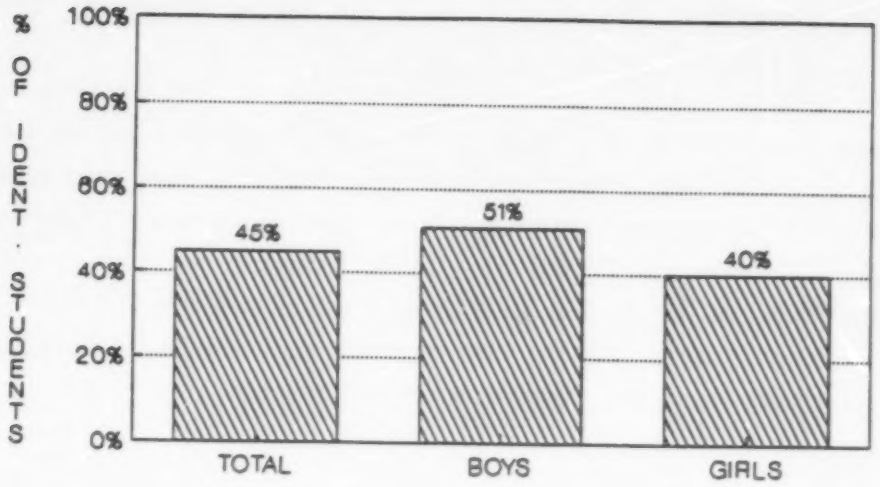
Prior to the administration of the questionnaire we offered students the opportunity to identify themselves as being Native resident on-reserve, or Native but not resident on a reserve, or non-Native. One hundred and ninety-three identified themselves as being Natives on-reserve or Metis/off-reserve, the split being 92 on-reserve (58 per cent girls and 42 per cent boys) and 101 off-

reserve (50 per cent boys, 50 per cent girls). Thirteen students, known by the schools' administrations as either on-reserve or Metis/off-reserve students, chose not to complete the self-identification sheet and so their results are not included in the following analyses.

4.3 General Comparison by Factor between On-Reserve and Metis/Off-Reserve Students

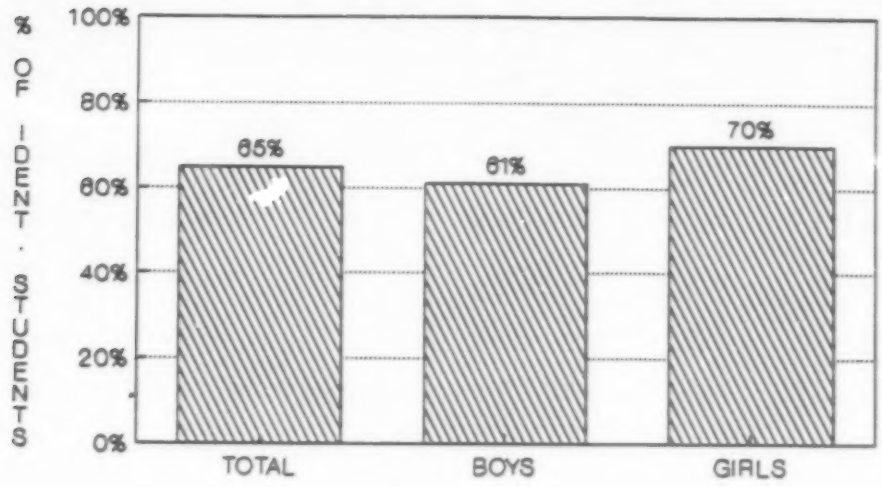
Figures 12 and 13, show the percentages of students identified as probable school leavers for both the on-reserve and the Metis/off-reserve groups.

A much higher percentage of Metis/off-reserve students were identified as dropouts, 65 per cent overall, 61 per cent of the boys and 70 per cent of the girls. Moreover, there is an extremely high percentage of Metis/off-reserve girls identified as dealing with problems that are likely to lead many if not all of those identified to drop out of secondary school.



TOTAL: 92 BOYS: 39 GIRLS: 53

Figure 12 Percentage of On-Reserve Native Students Identified as at Risk of Dropping Out



TOTAL: 101 BOYS: 51 GIRLS: 50

Figure 13 Percentage of Off-Reserve Native Students Identified as at Risk of Dropping Out

4.4 Comparison between On-Reserve and Metis/Off-Reserve Students by Sex and Factor

Tables 9 and 10 provide illustrations of the data for the on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve students identified as at risk on each factor. The Metis/off-reserve students are identified as dealing with more problems than the on-reserve Indians and, overall, are identified in larger numbers as probable school dropouts. In particular, higher numbers of Metis/off-reserve girls are identified as dealing with numerous problems that are likely to contribute to their dropping out of high school.

FACTORS	TOTAL (n=92)	BOYS (n=39)	GIRLS (n=53)
1. Family Environment	20%	23%	17%
2. Personal Traits	17%	13%	21%
3. Educational Plans	11%	13%	09%
4. School Abilities	15%	18%	13%
5. Teacher-Student Relationship	20%	31%	11%
6. Motivation for School	10%	08%	11%

Table 9 Percentage of On-Reserve Students Identified as at Risk of Dropping Out, by Factor

FACTORS	TOTAL (n=101)	BOYS (n=51)	GIRLS (n=50)
1. Family Environment	37%	27%	46%
2. Personal Traits	23%	18%	28%
3. Educational Plans	13%	10%	16%
4. School Abilities	28%	25%	30%
5. Teacher-Student Relationship	23%	20%	26%
6. Motivation for School	12%	14%	10%

Table 10 Percentage of Off-Reserve/Metis Students Identified as at Risk of Dropping Out, by Factor

Factor 1: Family Environment

It is with the Metis/off-reserve girls that we find the most important difference between the groups. Almost half of the Metis/off-reserve girls are identified as dealing with family environment problems. This is almost double the number of boys identified on the same factor. It is also a five- to tenfold increase in comparison to data gathered on general population girls (that is, the mainly non-Native population) in the rest of the province, (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High School, in press).

The results for the on-reserve students, show a higher but less dramatic difference between the Native students and the general population students.

These findings are generally in keeping with the results reported in Section 3.4 where almost all parties agreed that home support was inadequate and where that inadequacy was identified as being particularly prominent in the case of Metis/off-reserve students.

Factor 2: Personal Traits

On the Personal Traits factor, the Metis/off-reserve students are again identified in larger numbers. Larger percentages of both sets of girls are dealing in larger numbers with this particular type of problem compared to the boys.

Factors 3 and Factor 6: Educational Plans and Motivation for School

Motivation for School and Educational Plans are the two factors where we have identified fewer at-risk students and also where the results between the on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve students are not substantially different. There are some slight differences between the boys' and the girls' results. In particular, the Metis/off-reserve girls are identified in larger numbers as dealing with problems associated with educational plans.

There is a considerable discrepancy between the relatively low identification of students being at risk due to motivational (including attendance) factors here and the very prominent observations reported in Section 3.10 that Native dropouts skipped individual classes and school frequently. This discrepancy is

particularly interesting because it suggests that on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve Natives do not, on the whole, begin attending provincial secondary schools with poor attitudes or motivation. These attitudes, which lead to skipping classes and skipping whole days of school, develop largely as the students gain more experience in the school. This would strongly suggest that there are factors within the school itself and closely associated with the demands made on students by the school and the educational system that infect the students' initially positive attitude and engender alienation in the students, leading in many cases to the extreme act of dropping out.

Similarly, the discrepancy between the relatively low rate of students being at risk due to inadequate or unrealistic educational plans and the report of non-Native and Native educators in section 3.7 might be explained in a similar way. Native students start out with positive plans and aspirations but the experiences they encounter as they attend secondary school contribute to an erosion of these plans and aspirations. The erosion may continue to the point where many students abandon their educational expectations entirely and shed them and the school at the same time.

Factor 4: School Achievement

On the School Achievement factor, we find almost double the percentage of Metis/off-reserve students identified as being at risk, and once more a larger percentage of the girls. The on-reserve boys are identified in slightly higher numbers at this factor than on-reserve girls. For the on-reserve students, we have to be more careful in making comparisons because the number of boys is significantly lower than the number of girls that we were able to survey. Comparing these results with the discussion under Language Skills and Academic Achievement in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, we have confirmation that Metis/off-reserve students are perceived as encountering problems in these areas both by the dropouts themselves and by their parents. It would appear that students are shrewd judges of their own strengths and weaknesses and that their parents know them better than educators generally give them credit for.

The high proportion of students found at risk on this factor so early in their secondary school career is particularly noticeable. This would indicate that the students' academic difficulties begin in elementary school. The relatively wide availability of band-employed Native education/social counsellors might account for the on-reserve students being less at risk on this factor than the Metis/off-reserve students who may have no formal mechanism to help them address their educational difficulties outside school.

Factor 5: Teacher-Student Relationship

With factor 5, there is a noticeable difference between the results for the Metis/off-reserve and on-reserve students. In particular, a very high percentage of the on-reserve boys are identified as dealing with this type of problem. On-reserve girls were identified to a much lesser degree as dealing with problems related to teacher-student relationships.

A particularly high proportion of Native students are identified as having problems in the area of their relationships with teachers - and this in their first year of secondary school. A substantial minority of all categories of Native students, but particularly on-reserve boys and Metis/off-reserve girls, indicated that they believed that their teachers did not understand them very well, did not motivate them to learn, rarely encouraged them when things were going badly, and felt that they couldn't count on their teachers to help them with problems encountered in school.

A very tiny proportion of teachers in provincial secondary schools are Native. Our interviews with non-Native educators tended to show that out-of-school interaction between them and Natives tended to be quite minimal, many never having had any occasion to visit a reserve or knowing much about the background of the on-reserve Indians. Many non-Native counsellors in whose schools students from "fly-in" communities were enrolled had never visited these communities or met the parents of these children. When many students come to realize the gulf that exists between their experience and that with which their non-Native educators are

familiar they tend to regard the gulf as unbridgeable by them, the students, alone.

General Observations

In our results from both of these sites, Native students on-reserve are identified in larger numbers as being probable school leavers in comparison to the general population. The dropout figures for on-reserve Native students, reported in Section 2, support this observation. However, they are considerably better off than their Metis/off-reserve Native counterparts who demonstrate an even greater tendency to be at risk.

4.5 Review of Results Obtained from the Northern Site

The numbers of on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve students who were identified as being at risk of dropping out in the northern region of the province are shown in Figure 14.

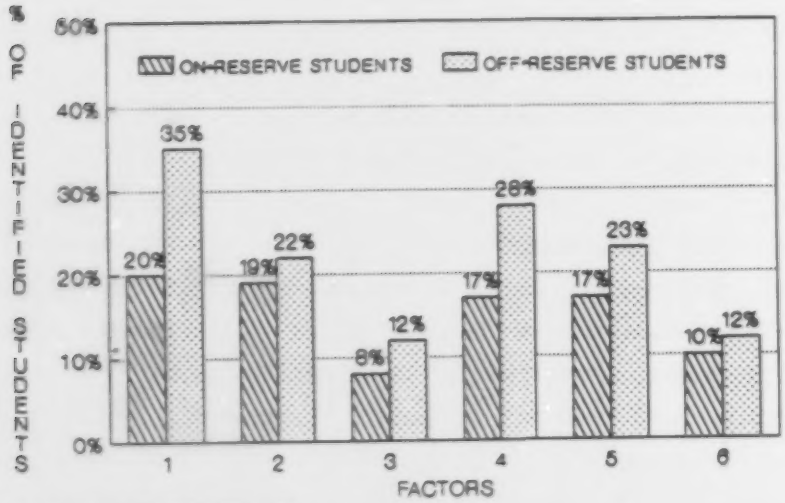
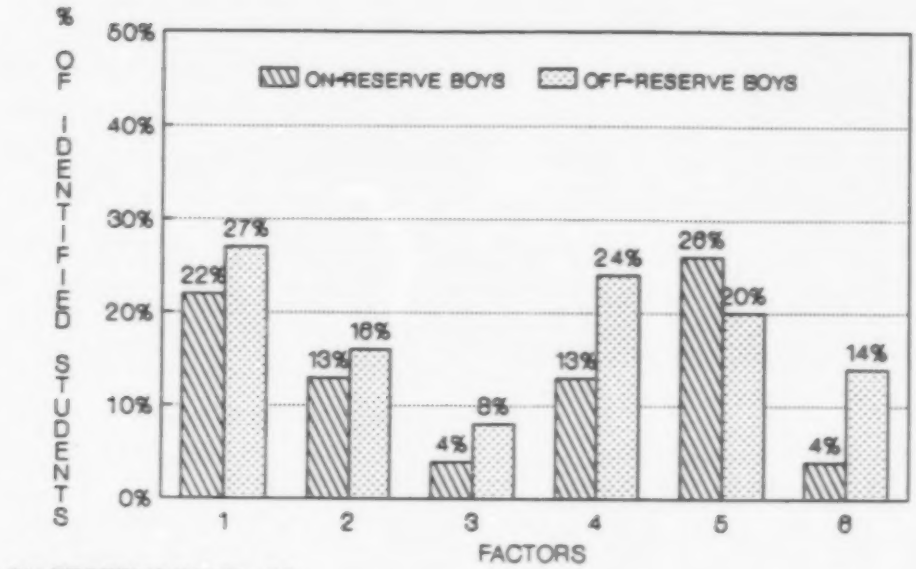
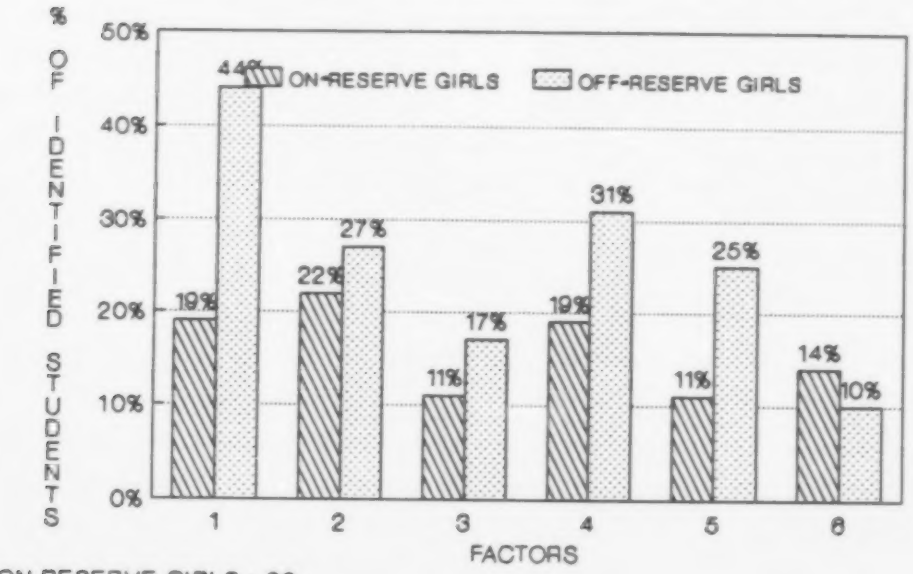


Figure 14 Percentage of On-Reserve and Metis/Off-Reserve Students Identified as Being at Risk, by Factor, Northern Site



ON RESERVE BOYS : 23
OFF RESERVE BOYS: 49

Figure 15 Percentage of Identified Boys On and Off Reserve, by Factor, Northern Site



ON RESERVE GIRLS : 36
OFF RESERVE GIRLS: 48

Figure 16 Percentage of Identified Girls On and Off Reserve, by Factor, Northern Site

A higher percentage of the Metis/off-reserve students are identified as being at risk of dropping out on each of the six factors compared to the on-reserve students. In particular, the Metis/off-reserve girls in these communities (Figure 16) as compared to the boys (Figure 15) and the on-reserve girls (Figure 16) are prominently identified as being probable school leavers.

The figures were confirmed by the experience of educators in these communities. Indeed, based on past experience they expected that over time the dropout results would be higher than those predicted by the "DECISIONS" questionnaire administered in Grade 9. In other words, they claimed that if we were to re-administer the same questionnaire in Grade 10 to those students left in the school, the percentages of "at risk" students identified would be even higher.

This information is all the more important in light of the fact that, as was mentioned in Section 2 of this report, no retention, attrition and graduation records for Metis/off-reserve students are maintained by any agency. It is certain that the dropout and graduation rates for Metis/off-reserve students will vary quite considerably from location to location and, as has already been pointed out, we cannot generalize the results of our study to the Metis/off-reserve provincial secondary school population as a whole.

However, given the fact that there was also a higher proportion of Metis/off-reserve students compared to on-reserve students identified as being as risk in the southern site, this matter would be worth pursuing by individual secondary schools themselves in order to determine if the Metis/off-reserve group constitutes a group whose needs are being overlooked.

A further observation is that lower numbers of students display problems in the areas of educational plans (Factor 3) and motivation for school (Factor 6). The greatest threat to students' likelihood of achieving academic success appears to be family environment; their personal traits and feelings about themselves; their past experience of academic success or failure, homework habits and self-confidence; and their relationships with those who

teach them. In other words, on the whole, they appear to begin their secondary school careers with more or less appropriate enthusiasm for and expectations from the educational system but the cards are stacked against them in other areas over which they have little or no direct control.

4.6 Comparison Between At-Risk Students in the Northern and Southern Sites

It would appear from our data (Figure 17) that northern Native students are, in general, at greater risk of dropping out than their southern counterparts. Nominal Roll figures also show that registered Indians are more likely to drop out in northern districts than in more southern districts and the Ontario Metis and Aboriginal Association, while expressing concern about Metis/off-reserve students province-wide, has expressed particular concern about the northern, rural Metis/off-reserve population. Our interview data reported in Section 3 also corroborates the presence of more factors contributing to dropout in the northern region of the province. There are particular geographical, social, economic, educational and historical factors present in northern Ontario which both singly and together militate against a northern Native student experiencing the same chances of academic success as his or her southern counterpart.

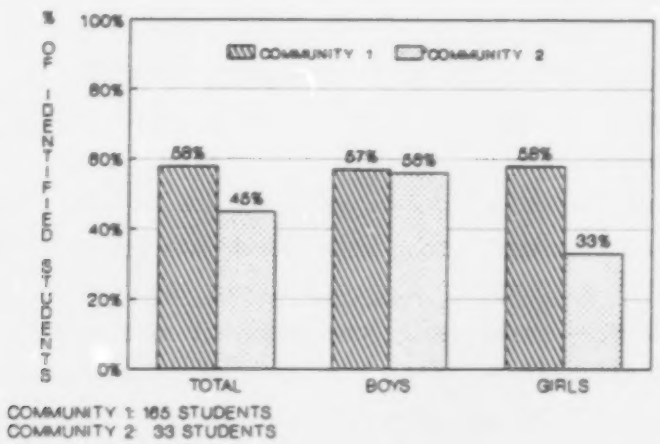


Figure 17 Percentage of Native Students Identified as Being at Risk, by Site

4.7 Level of Study

Table 11 presents the number and percentage of both groups of students surveyed as they are registered in English and mathematics for the three levels of study, basic, general and advanced.

	ON RESERVE		OFF RESERVE	
	n	%	n	%
ENGLISH				
BASIC	10	11	9	9
GENERAL	57	62	63	62
ADVANCED	21	23	22	22
MATHEMATICS				
BASIC	14	15	6	6
GENERAL	49	53	65	64
ADVANCED	23	25	17	17

Table 11 Number and Percentage Surveyed On and Off Reserve Enrolled in English and Mathematics, by Level

There is an important difference between the Native students and the general population (i.e., mainly non-Native) students that have been surveyed over the past few years (Quirouette, P. A Study to Identify Probable School Leavers in High Schools, in press). The "normal" general population pattern is that in Grade 9 the majority of students (about 60 per cent) are registered in advanced-level courses, with 30 per cent or so of students registered at general level, and approximately 7 to 10 per cent of students registered at the basic level. The normal process is that a large proportion of the Grade 9 students taking advanced-level courses will slowly transfer to general-level courses in Grades 10, 11 and 12. However, an important majority of both on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve students are registered right from Grade 9, in general-level courses. This leaves very little leeway for students to move from

one program to the other (which usually means down, rather than up). Thus Native students tend to be at a disadvantage from the time they enter secondary school in that the majority of them are either placed in or opt for the general-level courses. Many educators interviewed across the province during the course of this study commented on the unrepresentatively high proportion of Native students in basic and general courses. Many commented that some of these students had been recommended for other levels by the Grade 8 teacher but that they chose not to follow that recommendation for a variety of reasons: they did not want to be separated from their friends, they did not appreciate how their choice would affect their future options, or they did not want to cope with the work which would accompany opting for advanced-level courses.

RECOMMENDATION # 40

That a project be urgently undertaken to develop a sensitive and validated "DECISIONS" instrument for the early identification of Native students at risk of dropping out.

RECOMMENDATION # 41

That intervention strategies appropriate to the at-risk diagnoses made by the Native-oriented "DECISIONS" instrument be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated so that an empirical information base may be developed on the optimum strategies for providing support for Native students at risk of dropping out.

SECTION 5

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO NATIVE STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN PROVINCIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

Introduction

The insistence that there be a treatment of success in this study came directly from some of the principal players - Native education counsellors, school boards, Band Education Committees and secondary school principals. They argued persuasively that to focus simply on the dropout phenomenon would be to ignore much of what they have worked for individually and cooperatively for many years. Their hard-won successes should be acknowledged both as a tribute to the effort which all parties have contributed to the improvement of the conditions for Native students in the provincial secondary school system and as a source of inspiration to those players for whom success has been more elusive.

Accordingly, this section presents a brief summary and listing of factors believed by the participants to be actively contributing to situations where higher rates of Natives students are obtaining secondary school graduation diplomas.

5.1 THE FIRST NATION

Clear Attitudes Towards Provincial School Secondary Education

Bands whose children enjoy a high graduation rate appear to be those whose Chief and Council

- have put the education of their children as a top priority on their agenda
- regard education in and graduation from provincial secondary schools as desirable
- see their children's successful education in provincial secondary schools as a potential contribution towards the fulfillment of the band's strategic development plan
- communicate these views, unambiguously, internally to band members and externally to the school board, the schools, and to the broader non-Native community.

Internal Administrative Structure

These bands have a strong leadership (Chief, Council Members) capable of representing and gaining the confidence of the vast majority of band members. They have capable and competent, probably full-time, administrators (manager, education/social counsellor, attendance officer, etc.) who are appointed for their expertise in the area required by their position.

The leadership and the administrators may have considerable work experience on- and off-reserve. They have a sound understanding of the politico-educational system as it exists at federal, provincial and school board levels and are capable of using their knowledge of those systems to the advantage of their band. They firmly believe that in most cases more can be achieved by using their understanding of the system, its strengths and its limitations, to achieve their goals rather than by confrontation.

A negotiating committee including members of the Band Education Committee have successfully concluded a negotiated tuition agreement with the school board. That tuition agreement included mandatory provisions for the First Nation's representation on the board of trustees. Preparation for that agreement and the negotiation itself brought the band and the board of education to a level of familiarity and respect for each other greater than that which had hitherto existed.

The Native Trustee

The Native Trustee has been appointed because of his or her interest in and capability of representing the First Nation to the board of education, and communicating the board's deliberations to the band via the Band Education Committee. The trustee faithfully attends all the meetings of the board of trustees, ensures that he or she is fully informed regarding the matters on the agenda and capable of authoritatively and accurately representing the views of the band. The trustee makes the minutes of board meetings available to the Band Education Committee and reports in a timely fashion to the committee matters which it must address or of which it must be apprised.

Band Education Committee

The Band Education Committee is made up of members with a particular commitment to and interest in the education of the band's children.

The committee meets regularly and members attend all meetings prepared to address the agenda in a thoughtful and informed manner. The chairperson of the Band Education Committee has been appointed by Chief and Council because of his or her particular qualifications and experience relevant to providing informed educational leadership for the band and its members.

The Band Education Committee invites, with adequate advance notice, the principal(s) of the provincial secondary school(s) attended by band children and the director of education or delegate to meetings when it is appropriate.

The committee is pro-active rather than re-active. It has a set of procedures for dealing with problems; it plans its work and completes what it undertakes; it has formulated clear and explicit educational objectives for the band which are understood and widely supported by band members. It keeps an effective filing system which includes a record of its objectives and minutes recording its deliberations. Its open meetings are widely attended by parents and other band members who are kept informed of the issues, and the background to the issues being addressed.

The Band Education/Social Counsellors

Qualifications and Experience

Education/Social Counsellors have completed elementary and secondary school and have formal training for their positions. They have a level of qualification and experience both on and off the reserve which permit them to impart to parents the confidence that they and their children have sound, specialist help when required and to interact with school and school board personnel as professional peers.

The Education/Social Counsellors are completely familiar with how provincial education is administered in Ontario and how the local school board and secondary schools function. They are completely familiar with the role of the elementary school, the

parent, the student and the secondary school in the promotion process from Grade 8 to Grade 9. They know the requirements for obtaining a secondary school graduation diploma and the implications of studying at any of the three levels, basic, general and advanced, on the future educational plans of students who require their advice on educational matters.

Work Routine

Education/Social Counsellors maintain a formal working timetable known to those working in the band office and they are in regular, direct contact with students, parents and the school principal(s) or delegate in the school where students for whom they are responsible are enrolled.

They have routine access to an office in the school, as well as on the reserve where it is known that they can be located at certain times, where messages can be left and where calls are returned promptly.

They are familiar at least on a professional basis with the principal, teachers and counselling staff of the school(s) as well as with school board superintendents and the director of education and have no hesitation about and feel comfortable interacting with those persons on professional matters.

They are invited to attend, and do attend, school and inter-school meetings which bear on issues related directly or indirectly to their work and participate in many of the professional development sessions offered by the school and/or the school board. They contribute both formally and informally to school and board-wide professional development sessions dealing with matters on which they possess special expertise and their experience has given them an informed perspective.

The Education/Social Counsellor, along with the Education Committee, have been instrumental in

- establishing a widely attended, high-profile promotion ceremony on-reserve for students moving through secondary school grades, acquiring credits and obtaining the graduation diploma
- establishing an attendance policy for students coupled to an

incentive scheme which provides regular attenders with a monthly stipend

- establishing a position for a Native Studies Coordinator who is available to any local school wishing to include a Native perspective in any of its courses

- raising the level of educational expectations of and from band children

- providing not only encouragement, direction, and support for students at risk of dropping out but also recognition and praise for those who are performing well

- providing guidance to parents as to how they can best reinforce their children's efforts to perform to the best of their ability in school.

5.2 THE SCHOOL BOARD

School boards in whose schools Native students enjoy a high graduation rate appear to be boards who believe that Native students both on- and off-reserve are legitimate clients of their schools, clients whose particular needs and characteristics they are willing to address.

The boards are familiar with and willing to address the issue of any discrepancy between the academic success rate of Native students and that of non-Native students, even though the causes of the discrepancy may not be readily apparent.

Each of these school boards tries to ensure a policy of providing every student with the nurture he or she requires to experience academic and social growth in the system. It does this in several ways. Firstly, it ensures that the First Nation exercises its right to appoint a Native trustee to the board and that that trustee is inducted into the workings, policies and procedures of the board.

Secondly, it ensures that the particular requirements of the students from the band are addressed (either through addenda to the tuition agreement or as part of its own services) dealing with such matters as the provision of late transportation to allow Native students to participate in extra-curricular activities, Native

Language courses, Native Studies courses, special French courses for Native students who studied a Native language, but not French, prior to secondary school, and particular attention to language development across the curriculum. It also ensures that it has an active policy towards multiculturalism in its schools.

Thirdly, it establishes a sensitive channel, possibly in the form of a Native Liaison Committee as a subcommittee of the board, to provide it with information on how well the Native student population is being served by the board's educational system, policies and procedures and how it can be more effectively served.

Fourthly, it opens and maintains a channel of communication directly between the senior executives of the board of education (director, superintendents) and the Chief and Council of the band and/or group to which responsibility for education has been delegated.

And, fifthly, it ensures the appointment of a principal/ principals capable of sympathetically implementing board policy regarding Native students - and any other minority group in its secondary schools.

The school board finds it easier to direct its attention to the needs of Native students who are resident on-reserve because of their identity as tuition-agreement students. Metis/off-reserve students are often more difficult to identify. However, a board with a large known population of Metis/off-reserve students - particularly a population of status Indians who have relatively recently moved off the reserve will have appointed a Native Education/Attendance/Social Counsellor to help such students and their parents to accommodate to educational practice in the board's schools.

The board arranges, through the tuition agreement with the band and INAC, either to accept the Native Education Counsellor as a board employee or, alternatively, to agree to work closely with a band-employed Native Counsellor. This latter approach involves giving the Native Education Counsellor access to its schools and ensuring the cooperation of the school administration, teachers and counselling services.

5.3 THE SCHOOL

Schools in which Native students enjoy a high rate of success are schools which have principals who are actively promoting strategies for maximizing the academic success of all their students, but also consciously for the subgroup of Native students and are capable of portraying an outstanding ability to engage their teaching and support staff on the same mission.

The mission is likely to have been articulated by the school staff in a formal manner, such as the following, and displayed prominently in the school.

THE SCHOOL MISSION

At Pine Hill Secondary School, we will provide the students in our care with an enjoyable, success-oriented environment in which to learn.

By participating in stimulating opportunities to grow, both in and out of the classroom, our young people should develop both socially and academically - and through this, increase their sense of achievement, improve their self-esteem, and develop as responsible, independent thinkers.

We will encourage the realization that learning, in our fast changing world, is a life-long challenge and will develop in our students skills and values which will help them become successful members of their society.

The principals of these schools promote an active homeroom program where homeroom classes are carefully made up to incorporate a good mix of Native students, non-Native students, students who are known to have good leadership qualities, disruptive students, etc. The purpose of this mixed grouping is to bring students into contact with one another in ways which are potentially rewarding and different from the groupings which occur as a result of travel arrangements, home community, or minority affiliation. This does not stifle natural friendships and groupings; it broadens student contacts which otherwise might remain restrictive and narrow.

The principal poses not only the question "What can be done for Native students in this school?" but also "What can Native students contribute to the school?"

One result of this searching for ways to encourage students to contribute is the existence of an active Native student council in

the school which, like other student groups, organizes meetings and public events in which it shares the focus of its interests and its accomplishments with fellow students and their parents.

The principal is aware of discrepancies between the rates at which Native and non-Native students study at basic, general and advanced levels, obtain credits, progress from one grade level to another and obtain the secondary school graduation diploma and participate in school activities. The principal does not automatically view discrepancies as illustrative of the extent to which the Native student constituency is out of line with the school, but considers the extent to which the school's current practices might not be serving Native students well and is willing and able to take effective remedial action based on the conclusions drawn and in consultation with the Band Education Committee.

Principals have successfully sought to recruit Native teachers and continue to actively seek to increase the number of Native teachers in the school.

Principals rely a great deal on the Native Education Counsellor to act as the school's day-to-day liaison with the band administration and the parents of the on-reserve Native students. Principals are aware that there is an inherent danger in over-burdening the Native counsellor with all the school-band communication and so make an active effort to maintain direct communication links with the Chief, the chairperson of the Band Education Committee and individual parents. They, and/or their delegates, do so by attendance at Band Education Committee meetings and direct contact with the Chief when and as necessary.

Similarly, within the school, the principal is aware of the dangers of the teaching or counselling staff assuming that any matter involving a Native student is by definition a matter for the Native Counsellor. Hence, professional development days have been devoted to such topics as multiculturalism and the school, cross-cultural communication, dealing with multicultural classes, the history and culture and organization of the local Native band(s), the role of the Native Education Counsellor, the background and culture of the Metis/off-reserve population, etc. All of these

training days, including visits to the Native communities whose children attend the school, have served to foster the appreciation that the success and failure of Native students is not merely a matter for the attention of the band and the Native Education Counsellor but a matter for the concern and responsible action of the entire school and the community at large.

The Native Education Counsellors are not kept at arm's length from the school. On the contrary, they are treated as colleagues by school staff, attend school meetings and professional development sessions and are kept apprised of school matters.

The school staff know where, when and how reliable contact can be made with the Native Education Counsellor, both in the school and on the reserve and make use of that knowledge.

Whether the Native Education Counsellor is an employee of the band or of the school board, his or her professional responsibilities have been clearly articulated and are familiar to the principal and the school staff who respect the counsellor as a reliable, well-trained and hard-working professional who is a valued member of the school's resource team.

Principals do not feel isolated when dealing with matters relating to their Native student constituency; they know that they can rely upon the immediate active advice and support of the Band Education Committee, the band Chief and of the director of education when it is required.

Neither the principals nor their staff stereotype Native students (or any other group of students) or project negative expectations onto them. The promotion from Grade 8 to Grade 9 is dealt with in such a way that all concerned are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the process involving course and level selection. The school has an active strategy involving the elementary feeder schools, its own teachers, the Band Education Committee and Native parents and teachers to encourage Native students to study and achieve success in the subjects and levels which are most appropriate to their capabilities, desires and future plans.

Principals are familiar with the communities from which their Metis/off-reserve students come, and with the support agencies such as the Friendship Centres and Youth Employment Centres which serve these communities. Principals maintain good lines of communication with and encourage these agencies to liaise directly with the school on all matters relating to the educational well-being of the youth they serve. They also consult with and invite personnel in these centres to school functions

5.4 SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Using a structured interview technique, 97 (36 north, 61 south) high school graduates and Grade 12/13 students likely to graduate within the year were asked to reflect on their experience and to recount the sources from which they obtained help that contributed to their academic success.

5.4.1 Help from Home, Family, Community

On-Reserve Natives

- My parents helped me. They gave me encouragement. There was nothing in the community (Female, North).
- Mainly my mother. I'd get in trouble if I brought home a bad mark; she said I could do better and I finally believed it. Me and my cousin compete to get the best marks. My uncle didn't do well so he likes to see us do well in school. The community is mostly negative. Other kids (dropouts) tease you (Male, North).
- My parents always expected that we would finish school and my mother always pushed me to complete my homework (Female, North).
- It was easy to finish high school. My parents always expected me to graduate. The community didn't make any difference (Female, South).
- I had lots of help from my mom with problems and homework. I could talk to her about anything. Also my brother and sister were quiet when I wanted to work and I used them for practice in Family Studies (Female, South).
- I had a lot of support from my family. I did well in elementary school. Both my parents encouraged me to do things on my own - they didn't really twist my arm. I think you have to do things on your own really to get something out of it. My whole family was supportive. I had some cousins who graduated. Also the chief and council met with us and emphasized the importance of graduating (Male, South).

Metis/Off-Reserve Students

- My family helped me the most. They always told me I needed education to get a job and if I didn't finish school and get a good job, they'd throw me out (Male, North).
- My grandfather made sure I got to school and he kept encouraging me. I got help from the community too. They gave me a summer job (Female, North).

Most graduates referred to the support they enjoyed from the immediate family. Help from the immediate family comes in one or all of several forms:

1. simple verbal, emotional and environmental support i.e., words of encouragement and understanding, the necessary conditions to study, a quiet place in the home, reasonable demands to perform chores and other household duties
2. support by example i.e., parents or other family members who have themselves persisted in school, graduated and have reaped some form of reward such as regular, interesting or well-paid employment
3. concrete help with course selection, homework assignments and postsecondary plans
4. an often implicit <u>expectation</u> that the child will remain in school and successfully accumulate the necessary credits to graduate.

The first type of support is the one most widely referred to.

The second and third extended types of help add enormously to the depth and quality of the "supportive environment" in which a student operates, but were referred to by fewer students.

The fourth type of support was usually referred to in addition to other types of support, viz. the <u>expectation</u> on the part of the parents (and sometimes the community as a whole) that the student would graduate successfully from secondary school. Parental and/or community expectation is a more subtle form of support and appears to engender confidence and positive expectations in the students themselves. Positive expectations were referred to more often by on-reserve Natives and more particularly from reserves which had a relatively long tradition of successful school education, a high

rate of on- and off-reserve employment and a relatively high level of economic development.

While support from the immediate family was referred to more frequently and in greater detail than support from the community at large, there were a minority of successful students who reported that they had enjoyed little or no support from these sources. It is clear that while support from the immediate family and the community at large is enormously advantageous to the success of the student, there may, in some cases at least, be other sources of support where this kind of support is lacking.

The community's as opposed to home and family's contribution ranges, in the successful students' experiences, from non-existent to highly significant. The greater the number of reserve residents who hold the view that the formal education of the band's children is of advantage not just to the children as individuals but to the entire band as an instrument in its own development and self-realization, the greater the likelihood that "community" support, i.e., support institutionalized as policy by the Chief and Council, will be available.

5.4.2 Ways In Which Successful Students Helped Themselves

On-Reserve Natives

- I've succeeded because I pushed myself. I think I'm a lazy person though (Male, North).
- I disciplined myself to attend (high school) (Female, North).
- I studied hard and took time out from going out with friends to study. I always went to bed early and got myself up (Female, North).
- I tried to prove to all the white guys that Indians are better than anyone else. I haven't had to work all that hard to get good marks, I just pay attention in class - it's interesting. I study to get good marks (Male, South).
- I set goals for myself; I want to become a social service worker. That way, I found it easy to motivate myself to do homework (Female, South).

- I enjoyed the classes and I went every day. I got lots of credits so I had lots of spares (spare periods) so I never tried to skip - maybe only 4 or 5 times (Female, South).

Metis/Off-Reserve Students

- I quit high school for a year once, but I went back because I wanted to go back. When I returned, I had my own car and I was engaged (Male, North).

- When I dropped out, I was one credit short of getting my diploma. I returned to get credits because I wanted to go to college (Female, North).

- I don't drink, though I associate with people who do drink. I've always been good at learning from other people's mistakes. I try to keep out of trouble and don't do things that work against myself (Male, South).

- I first knew, after I dropped out, that I wanted a good job. Going back and finishing seemed to be the only way (Male, South).

Clearly, strategies for self-help vary with the individual. Many students positively enjoy their classes and their school experiences, both social and academic; some do not. Goal setting and self-discipline, and persistence in their attempts to achieve their goals, be they completing homework assignments, setting aside regular times for study, getting up in time to catch the bus or studying to get good grades, are all strategies for succeeding in school whether school is a pleasure or not. Understanding the place of secondary education in the achievement of postsecondary goals is important.

Metis/off-reserve students sometimes demonstrate considerable resourcefulness and awareness of the larger world and their relation to it. This broad, self-conscious perspective may have been developed out of necessity - Metis/off-reserve people do not have what both Native and non-Native educators have referred to as the "cocoon" or the "womb" of the reserve to fall back on, only their own resourcefulness. These comments must not be interpreted to mean that the resourcefulness exhibited by students is in direct

relationship to the absence of support systems. Support systems which provide the emotional and other kinds of security required by children must be available to both residents of reserves and Metis/off-reserve Natives. These support systems should engender self-reliance, not dependency. The major agencies providing this kind of support off-reserve are the Friendship Centres and the numerous variations on the Youth Employment Training Centres.

There is another form of self-help referred to by both on-reserve and Metis/off-reserve Natives. This type of self-help tends to recognize explicitly the crucial nature of the student's own mental attitude towards school, studying and graduation.

> "What helped me most to reach graduation was wanting it bad enough. If I hadn't wanted it, no matter who talked to me or no matter what they said to me wouldn't have had any influence."

This sentiment displaying a consciousness of one's own attitude and determination was expressed by both on-reserve and off-reserve Natives whose determination to succeed had been awakened by some crucial experience.

In some cases it was a realization during an out-of-school period of how important qualifications were to obtaining an interesting, well paying job; in other cases it was a realization that provincial school education could be used as a tool by the individual to help improve the lot of his or her band or community and did not necessarily involve assimilation or abandonment of one's own Native identity and affiliations.

5.4.3 Help from Teachers, Counsellors, Others at School

On-Reserve Students

- No help from teachers really, just small stuff. School Counsellors didn't really do anything (Female, South).
- Counsellors helped to keep motivation going. Teachers were not particularly useful - they just did their job and didn't do any extra. Belonging to clubs was important. It helped develop a sense of belonging to the school (Male, South).
- Most teachers are willing to help you if you have problems. They will tutor if you ask (Male, South).

- Most teachers are very willing to help you if you need them. The counsellors, teachers and administrators all played the same role (in my experience) (Female, South).

Metis/Off-Reserve Students

- Native counsellors are crucial to the success of changing the (educational) system. Only they are sympathetic (Female, North).

- I developed a good understanding with the teachers. The school counsellors were supportive. They deserve congratulations (Male, North).

- The Principal and the Counsellor made it easy for me to come back (to school) after (I'd dropped out) (Male, South).

- I had a close friend who had the same family problems (single parent family and that parent was an alcoholic). We talked and supported each other through school and graduated together (Male, South).

Successful students, teachers and counsellors (Native and non-Native) tend to develop at least a minimally adequate working relationship which contributes to at least a minimally tolerable environment for the student. Most of the successful students reported receiving positive support from teachers, counsellors and often the administrative staff. The interviews demonstrated that students are sensitive to teachers' attitudes to them. They expressed a need to be given evidence that their teachers care about them, and are interested in them as individuals. Caring about and guiding students is not just the job of the Native Education/Social Counsellor, but the responsibility of every staff member. In northern areas, Native counsellors were very frequently mentioned as the important sources of support, particularly where the tradition of educational success is less well entrenched. There, the Native counsellor, whether band-employed or school-employed, plays an even more significant role in raising the feelings of support experienced by successful students. These Native counsellors often serve both students resident on-reserve

and Metis/off-reserve students and this significantly increases their workload.

Some school boards in major high-population centres have added to their counselling units full-time professionally trained counsellors of Native origin to look after the problems of the Metis/off-reserve students. The boards have taken this action on their own initiative as part of what they perceived to be their duty to serve all of their constituencies as well as possible.

Help Which Has Arisen From Good Experiences At School

- It was good to be president of the Athletics Association. (Male, on-reserve, South)
- You make a lot of friends, so your social life increases. Friends help you with your problems. (Female, on-reserve, South)
- I enjoy most courses I take. I like to write. It helps to get involved in activities. Friends are important. They help (when you) study together. (on-reserve, South)
- My name was on the honour roll - typing was fun. (on-reserve, North)
- I enjoyed the shop courses - that and cooperative education got me through Grade 12. (Male, Metis/off-reserve, North)
- I was more socially involved with the teachers than the students. I got answers from the teachers and the counsellors. I didn't join any activities because it would take time from my studies (Female, Metis/off-reserve, North).
- School came easy after I dropped out and I realized I needed to finish school to have a better life. (Male, Metis/off-reserve, South).

Successful students tend to find at least something that they actively like about school - particular subjects, teachers, counsellors, extra-curricular activities, friends etc., something that made it worthwhile attending and striving on a regular basis.

Some students only found stimulus to complete school after having dropped out and experienced what it was like to try to find work with little experience, few skills and no qualifications. According to educators, it is not at all uncommon for Native

students to return after a short or long period out of school. However, the experience does not produce uniformly motivated students. Some drop out again and do not return at least to secondary school; others remain in school with renewed interest or at least enough persistence to obtain the graduation diploma.

OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS

The same students and graduates were asked to reflect on their school experience and to recount the kinds of obstacles they had to wrestle with in order to succeed at school.

Obstacles Successful Students Had To Overcome In Themselves

- Waking up in the morning.
- I have a tendency to avoid homework. I try to get it done in class or on the bus.
- I went through a lot of trouble in my last semester. I missed some courses because I fooled around and slacked off. I had personal problems. I didn't get enough sleep at home so I'd end up sleeping in class.
- I don't know how to manage my time. In January I'm going to a time management course to help with that.
- Skipping school. I used to do it, but I always got caught. My parents never knew. So I stopped.
- Sometimes when you have a difficult situation you just have to face it head-on.
- I quit school for a year to have a baby. When I went back I did better but I didn't go as often. My friends had left school, so I didn't have people to hang around with.

The kinds of obstacles that successful students both on-reserve and off-reserve managed to overcome appear to be identical to the problems that dropouts were unable to overcome: the temptation to skip classes, rising in time to catch the bus to school, the chore of homework, shyness, laziness, pregnancy and lack of purpose.

Obstacles At Home, In The Family, In The Community

- There are no problems at home.
- I have three other brothers and sisters. Both my parents work. It's hard to get work done at home. I try to get my work done at school, at noon hour. But it's hard to concentrate on work when your friends are around.
- Maybe the community offers too many social events - it's a temptation to miss school.
- In the community the other Native kids bugged me to skip out of school with them. I knew that if I got caught, my Ma would yell at me.
- My Mom and Dad got divorced. I didn't care as much or pay attention as much at school during this period.
- There wasn't any help from home. My father never pushed me.
- When I lived at home, I came home from school and cooked dinner for everybody, I did dishes, I cleaned the house, I babysat the baby and stayed up doing my homework. I wasn't allowed to go out. So I moved out, and then came back on the condition of no chores, just rent.
- I only go home to sleep. I spend time at my friend's house where there's no kids, no T.V., no loud music, just space. Home is too noisy and not conducive to study.

The problems at home, in the family and in the community which the successful students have overcome are again similar in kind to those which dropouts found overwhelming - an unsupportive or unstable home environment, persuasive friends, the scorn of those who have already dropped out, attractive community activities which conflict with the demands of school.

Judging by the high number of successful students who specifically pointed out that there were absolutely no obstacles to overcome in the family environment, it may be that successful students are not faced with home and family related obstacles as frequently as those who end up dropping out. And this may provide a further explanation for the difference between dropouts and successful students.

Students who are assured of support within the home and the family possess more resources to combat lack of support from the general community than do students who cannot rely upon support within the home and family or upon support from the general community.

Obstacles At School

- There weren't really any obstacles. You just go to school and get the marks. (Male, on-reserve, South)

- The teachers were sometimes prejudiced, indirectly. Such as placing all Native students together in the class, or not listening to Native students the same way as other students. (Female, on-reserve, North)

- Some teachers are very prejudiced and it really affected me. One teacher even said it was a problem with my people dropping out of high school. I said "You mean my family? What's 'my people'?" Why didn't he make a difference between me and everyone else? He apologized later. (Male, Metis/off-reserve, North)

- The Vice-Principal has a lot more Natives than non-Natives in his office. (Male, Metis/off-reserve, North)

- Mostly the teachers are pretty good. Some are less understanding for Native students. (Female, Metis/off-reserve, South)

- In secondary school, white students don't understand why Native students feel that they are prejudiced against. If there were Native counsellors in all schools, I think it would be a lot easier.

- Schoolmates have all had negative expectations of my education. Some resent that I am paid to study because they don't understand the Indian situation. The Vice-Principal gave me a hard time. He pushed me to finish school. (Male, on-reserve, North)

- People look down on you because you're a Native - mostly on the bus. When they got to know you they started treating you like a person instead of a Native. You just have to get right in there and say what you mean and stand up for yourself. (Female, Metis/off-reserve, North)

- Just going to school every day and doing homework is an obstacle, but if you want it bad enough you'll do it.

Once again, many successful students took pains to observe that in their experience there were no obstacles to overcome at school. However, many other successful students commented that they had to overcome racial stereotyping, prejudice, jealousy over the financial incentives some bands provide to encourage regular attendance, moody teachers, boring teachers, boring courses, the lack of a Native counsellor, and what they perceive as inflexible school rules.

Their strategies for success at the social level and academic level appears to be succinctly stated in the following comment:

> "It helps to have friends in the office and among the teaching staff. You have to get along with everybody as much as you can, and if you do your work, you'll get by."

Conclusion

There are many factors whose presence or absence may detract from a student's likelihood of experiencing success. Not all of those factors are under the control of one agency; some are uniquely controlled by INAC, by the Ministry of Education, by the school board, by the school, by the First Nation, by the parents and some are uniquely controlled by the students themselves. Hence, no one agency alone can provide the conditions for the academic success of Native students attending provincial secondary schools. But because the factors which are controlled by one agency only achieve their maximum potential to contribute positively when they interact with the factors controlled by another agency (e.g. a First Nation's desire for secondary school education for its children [+ve factor] requires that INAC make the necessary financial resources available [+ve factor], that the host school board views the Native students as a legitimate constituency in whose service its school will strive to function [+ve factors], that supportive boarding home education is available [+ve factor] and that the students from the First Nation concerned are encouraged by their parents and apply themselves to strive for success [+ve factors].

If even one agency withholds its cooperation by refusing to activate positively that factor (or set of factors) over which it has control, the success of the entire operation is put at serious risk if not sabotaged irretrievably.

This section of the study had identified and listed some of the factors which the various participants believe to contribute to student success. The ways in which these, and other, factors interact in specific contexts so as to produce optimum conditions for all Native students to achieve to the best of their capabilities are not well understood. First Nations, some of whose students graduate from provincial secondary schools, could benefit both themselves directly and other First Nations indirectly by reflecting upon the factors contributing to their students' records of success and identifying the ways in which these factors are orchestrated. Similarly, individual INAC officials in the regional and district offices possess valuable insights into success in individual contexts, insights which, if externalized and collated, would be of great value in presenting one particular perspective on this matter.

Given that the Native student is eventually either the beneficiary or the victim of the understanding or lack of understanding of these factors on the part of the individual school principals and teachers, First Nation educational personnel and Metis/off-reserve delivery agencies, there is some urgency in obtaining these insights. This urgency is intensified by INAC's intention to devolve responsibility for First Nation education upon the nations themselves by 1991.

Many First Nations will continue to purchase educational services from provincial secondary schools as their first choice strategy to provide education for their children. A solid information base is therefore urgently required so that the First Nations, the school boards, the schools and the other agencies involved can draw up the agreements which are most likely to help their children to succeed academically.

RECOMMENDATION # 42

That LEAs, agencies serving Metis/off-reserve Natives and the provincial schools attended by their students undertake to document local case studies describing the factors which they believe to contribute to the academic success of Native students in their specific contexts.

RECOMMENDATION # 43

That the Ministry of Education of Ontario undertake the compilation and distribution of these case studies to provincial school boards and use them as a new and additional component in the professional training of secondary school principals.

SECTION 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1981, the Ontario Native Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting pointed to the existence of the desire at both government and community levels to provide culturally appropriate service systems for Native people. The task force also observed that "In many cases, policies and mandates seemed to have the character of vague abstractions which, however well intentioned, could not provide guidelines for effective program implementation." (Maidman, F., Native People in Urban Settings: Problems, Needs and Services, A Report of the Ontario Task Force on Native People in the Urban Setting, 1981).

Throughout the duration of this study we have interviewed scores of policymakers, administrators and educators who have expressed common aspirations for the improvement of the academic performance of Native students in provincial secondary schools. Many of these individuals have openly admitted that while the will is there, the implementation of these desires eludes them. Without exception, those who have claimed to be experiencing some success in working towards these common aspirations for the education of Native children, have identified certain common strategies. Firstly, they have publicly expressed a willingness to address the issue without being certain in advance of what to do about it. Secondly, they have begun at the local level, that is a level at which they themselves have the authority and manpower to function directly. Thirdly, they have joined forces with the other key stakeholders at the local level and expressed their desire and willingness to work together on clearly articulated concerns. And fourthly, they have cooperatively planned very simple first steps capable of being undertaken by themselves with existing resources.

On the other hand, those who have made little or no attempt to make direct contact with other key players at the local level, or who have waited for the appearance from above of a detailed step-by-step blueprint for success, or who have assumed that someone else must take the first step, have often relapsed into hopeless paralysis.

Hence the superordinate recommendation arising from this study.

SUPERORDINATE RECOMMENDATION

That the key players at the local level, the provincial secondary school principals, the elementary feeder school principals, the Local Education Authority, the Friendship Centre/YETC education counsellor, parents and students sit down together and draw up two lists - one headed "What are our concerns?" and the other headed "What immediate action can each of us take to address some or all of these concerns?"

The rest of the recommendations listed in this section do not constitute a blueprint nor do they represent all the necessary or even sufficient conditions for assuring the educational success of Native students in Ontario provincial schools. They simply represent the most widely expressed (either explicitly or implicitly) concerns of the broadest range of Native and non-Native people who shared their ideas with us during this study and are followed by additional suggestions made by informants.

Without an active willingness on the part of the local players, i.e, individual First Nations, their education committees, students, parents, principals, teachers and counsellors from local bands, Native Friendship Centres and YET centres run under the auspices of Native women's associations to lay aside attitudes of resentment and blame and together to articulate and make public specific goals for the education of Native children attending Ontario provincial secondary schools, the best policies of the federal government, the provincial government and the Native organizations will remain abstract intentions. The first and most important obstacle to progress in this matter is not financial but human and exists not at the level of policy but at the level of local and individual action. Where the key players at the local level have agreed that they will work together and formulate a plan

of action, only then can additional resources be employed by these players in the attainment of their common plan.

RECORD KEEPING

Recommendations

1 That INAC, Statistics Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Education in cooperation with the First Nations, provincial school boards and schools establish and maintain an appropriate data-base to record and monitor educational progress of both individuals and cohorts of Native students from their date of entry into secondary school, including relevant information concerning their academic record in elementary school.

2 That a parallel data-base be established and maintained by the appropriate agencies in consultation with the organizations representing the Metis/off-reserve population, provincial school boards and schools, for Metis/off-reserve students enrolled in Ontario provincial secondary schools in the experimental self-goverment centres planned by OMAA.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Recommendations

3 That a program to develop literacy and language skills across all subjects of the secondary curriculum as required by students undertaking formal secondary school education be created, implemented and monitored for effectiveness.

#4 That an integrated content/English as a second language program for academic and other school purposes be developed, implemented in provincial secondary schools where required and monitored for effectiveness.

5 That the Ministry of Education scrutinize the referral to special education of Native students to ensure that students

displaying a lack of proficiency in English as their second language are not misdiagnosed as learning disabled.

Suggestions

- ESL professionals should address the needs peculiar to northern Native students.
- All students should be evaluated as to their level of literacy upon entry to secondary school. Genuine remedial programs should be implemented for students found to be deficient. (i.e., students should not be labelled exceptional and stuck in basic level, but efforts should be geared to allow them to take up advanced-level courses).
- teachers in all courses should be made aware of the issue of academic linguistic deficiencies and of what steps can be taken to remediate.
- increase teacher sensitivity to students who are not English L1 or speak non-standard dialect - techniques in all classes to deal with problems.
- ESL and literacy classes should be accredited.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Recommendations

6 That students be given explicit instruction in study skills as soon as they enter Grade 9 and given continuous upgrading in study skills appropriate to the demands made upon them as they advance through secondary school.

7 That First Nations establish supervised study centres with facilities for students to complete homework assignments.

8 That the procedures currently employed by each school to recommend the placement of students in programs of study and levels of study be scrutinized and reassessed.

9 That joint strategies be adopted by LEA's and secondary schools to enrol and maintain more Native students in

advanced-level courses and in programs leading to higher education.

Suggestions

- some students misdiagnosed as learning disabled or exceptional - instead there is need for intensive remedial work to allow them to catch up.
- evaluate standardized tests for cultural biases.
- teaching internship in band operated schools (teacher exchange for a semester?).
- study centres in community with teaching assistance (volunteer or paid).
- make available reference books, magazines, etc.
- study-skill/ note-taking/ essay-writing courses.
- homework should be done during supervised spares.
- teachers (when necessary) should reduce rate of speech, and ask questions to verify students's understanding.
- every effort must be made by way of remedial programs and counselling to increase the number of Native students taking advanced-level courses.
- increase availability of cooperative and school-based apprenticeship programs.
- peer tutoring programs should be set up.

STAFF STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Recommendations

10 That as part of professional development training, teachers be given opportunities to become familiar with their Native students' communities, LEAs and in particular the parents of their students.

11 That as part of the initial training of both primary and secondary school teachers, trainees be given the opportunity to intern in both band and federal schools as well as provincial secondary schools with high Native enrolments.

12 That a major strategy be urgently planned and adopted to recruit Native graduates into the secondary school teaching profession.

13 That a major effort be undertaken to identify Native people who have incomplete undergraduate degrees and to provide an inducement to encourage them to graduate and enter the secondary school profession.

14 That a strategy be planned and adopted to encourage Native secondary school teachers to undertake principalship training.

15 That affirmative action be taken to increase the numbers of qualified secondary school teachers employed in provincial secondary schools

Suggestions

- awards to Native students in areas such as attendance, success in certain subjects, and overall.
- arrange for more teachers to visit reserve/community to meet parents, band counsellors and administration.
- ensure that teacher training programs have course on issues in Native education and the "Native learner".

PARENTAL SUPPORT

Recommendations

16 That the Ministry of Education of Ontario on the basis of input from First Nations, Metis/off-reserve agencies and provincial school boards and secondary schools prepare guideline packages (preferably including video material) addressing the issue of the kinds of home support which can help promote the academic success of Native students.

17 That the Ministry of Education of Ontario prepare guideline packages (preferably including video material) explaining crucial aspects of the provincial school system

such as the role of the primary school, secondary school, parents and the students themselves in the selection of secondary school courses, levels of study, and how the selection of courses and levels can affect future choices.

Suggestions

- community workshops on defining educational goals, training parents how to help their children succeed in school, teach parents about how the system is set up, how it works, their roles and responsibilities.
- special arrangements to increase parent-teacher meetings (e.g., bussing parents or arranging rides, holding such meetings on reserve or in community centre).

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Recommendations

18 That each First Nation establish a Local Education Authority (LEA) with the capacity, authority and responsibility to negotiate, manage and administer all aspects of First Nation education and agreements with provincial school boards to provide secondary education for its children.

19 That each LEA, where it wishes to purchase secondary education services, negotiate, manage and monitor a binding agreement with a provincial school board to provide education for its children. Such agreements should include agreed upon aims, attendance policies, disciplinary policies, policies regarding the qualifications of teachers assigned to give instruction in Native languages and culture, etc.

20 That Section 165 of the Ontario Education Act be amended to remove the stipulation in 165(1)(b) that leaves representation of First Nations that do not have minimum numbers of students to the discretion of provincial boards. Tuition agreements between Local Education Authorities or

their equivalents and provincial boards should include a requirement for representation for Native people.

21 That appropriate Metis/off-reserve representative agencies, e.g. Native Friendship Centres, YET Centres under the auspices of Native women associations, liaise with provincial secondary schools on behalf of Metis/off-reserve students.

22 That provision be made for the timely enrolment of students from distant communities in host secondary schools and for parents to accompany their children to their new accommodation and new school and to meet face to face the personnel who will care for and teach their children while they are living away from home.

23 That resources also be in place to permit parents from distant communities to attend graduation ceremonies.

24 That student support services be available for students from distant communities and that these services include a parent communication service capable of interacting with parents in their first language.

Suggestions

- in communities without a band educational counsellor, a school/community liaison officer of Native origin should be hired. This person would operate out of the school or Friendship Centre.
- need for a clearly defined job description, including lines of authority for band education/social counsellors.
- school rules and sanctions to be taken for offences must be explicitly stated, published and agreed upon. Where there is strong disagreement, a mechanism for negotiation must be created.

- a school staff member sympathetic to Native people should act as an ombudsman in cases of dispute.
- ensure provision of a Native trustee on every board of trustees.
- the formation of Native Education Committees (LEAs) must be encouraged and models for their successful operation should be made available to interested parties.
- INAC should provide counsellors to stay with fly-in students and maintain contact with parents/community.
- toll-free lines to band offices for the use of students from distant communities,.
- Educators should be made aware of the need to balance negative home-school communication with more positive reports about students.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Recommendations

25 That LEAs, Metis/off-reserve organizations and provincial secondary schools encourage the formation of Native student clubs whose functions include Native student peer support and raising the pride and image of the Native student population among staff and students in the school.

Suggestions

- Native awareness days to increase cross cultural awareness, self-esteem and pride.
- peer tutoring arrangements.
- band/Native leaders or teachers should patronize the Native club in a school.
- guidance department must be informed when a student drops out
- The student's friends must be "red flagged" as being at high risk.

FUTURE PLANS

Recommendations

26 That Native students from their presecondary days have regular information from and access to qualified career and education counsellors who are thoroughly familiar with the communities whose children they counsel.

27 That provision be made for Native role model programs, both live and on videocassette, to be permanently available and continually expanded upon, for the use of provincial secondary schools.

Suggestions

- special emphasis on Native successes in the community, the province and the country, e.g., films, videos, guest speakers.
- work/study available for interested Natives.
- career counselling initiated in early grades.
- increase counsellors awareness and use of SGIS (Student Guidance Information Service).
- a realistic determination of the job possibilities for students in the north. This should be a special component of SGIS.
- study employment needs of northern communities and make information available to LEAs, schools, etc.
- guest speakers invited to community to talk about what they do and how they reached their positions.
- visits to various working environments.
- a redoubled effort to train, upgrade and develop Native educators. In areas with high Native enrollment, boards should make a concerted effort to hire and develop Native teaching staff.
- in remote communities added incentives should be offered to qualified Native staff.

DISCRIMINATION

Recommendations

28 That the LEAs and provincial secondary schools develop an active policy to promote mutual understanding and respect between the Native and non-Native communities both in school and in the community at large by providing visits to Native communities by teachers and whole classes from provincial schools and by providing visits by LEA members, Metis/off-reserve organizations and agencies, and Native parents to provincial secondary schools.

Suggestions

- School boards should have a clearly articulated policy against discrimination on the basis of race, religion, etc. and include a mechanism for dealing with complaints against staff or students.
- Native awareness days.

CURRICULUM

Recommendations

29 That the Ministry of Education of Ontario establish an information clearing house for teaching materials and other resources prepared for Native language and culture courses in provincial secondary schools.

30 That special one-credit French as a second language courses be made available in secondary schools for Native students who have studied or are studying a Native language.

31 That Native languages be offered in provincial secondary schools for credit at the three levels, basic, general and advanced where there is appropriate demand.

32 That a Native perspective in school instruction not be restricted to unitary, self-contained courses on Native language and culture but inform other courses and components of the curriculum in general.

33 That the appropriateness of the experience and qualifications of teachers of courses dealing with Native studies form part of the tuition agreement between LEAs and school boards.

Suggestions

- information network set up for the development and dissemination of materials and curriculum on Native history, culture and language.
- existing curriculum in all subjects should be adjusted to incorporate a Native perspective, e.g., environmental studies, AmerIndian accomplishments in mathematics, astrology, architecture, philosophy, oral literature, poetry, painting, crafts, law, etc. Such a development would benefit our entire educational system and might answer those who ask, "What does it mean to be a Canadian?"
- special need for revision of history curriculum.
- an exchange program for teachers wishing to teach a semester or a year in a predominantly Native school. This would increase effectiveness and understanding when they return to a school where Natives are a minority.
- Native languages should not be credit dead-ends, that is, stopping at Grade 10. They must be offered for credit at basic, general and advanced, and accepted as a language requirement at university.
- Native students should not be forced to choose between a Native language and French.
- should be a greater emphasis on local history, culture and traditions in each school board.
- Native educators and elders should be actively involved and consulted in production of curriculum. The LEAs and boards must foster a sense of ownership in this regard.
- Opportunities for cooperative work study programs should be identified and implemented where appropriate.
- alternative systems developed and promulgated for the recovery of dropouts.

- transition programs for student boarders should be evaluated. Where necessary their existence should be guaranteed in tuition agreements.

ATTENDANCE

Recommendations

34 That LEA's representative, Metis/off-reserve agencies and school boards agree upon a secondary school policy covering truancy, attendance, homework load, and homework completion requirements and that this policy form part of the tuition agreement.

Suggestions

- Province should match money with the Federation of Women Teachers Association's program for the support of Metis/non-status students. That program should also consider supporting status off-reserve.
- Native students should not be suspended for truancy. Alternative disciplinary procedures should be investigated and become standard policy across the province.
- Bands should give attendance awards.
- close cooperation between school attendance supervisor and Native liaison or band counsellor.
- Students with records of frequent absenteeism since elementary school should receive special attention.

COUNSELLING

Recommendations

35 That a major strategy be urgently planned and adopted to recruit Native graduates into the education and social counselling profession.

36 That affirmative action be taken to increase the numbers of professional counsellors of Native origin employed by provincial school boards and secondary schools.

STUDENTS FROM ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Recommendations

37 That schools in isolated communities offer as many courses and programs as possible up to and including the Grade 10 level so that students may remain in their home communities until they are more capable of coping with attending school away from home.

38 That more group homes be established for and appropriately near to students from isolated communities whose schools do not include complete 9 - 13 secondary programs, and that these and other types of accommodation arrangements include provision for

- a Native guidance/social counsellor
- tutoring assistance in the home
- a code of behaviour
- a recreation program
- information and assistance that encourages students to become involved in community programs.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Recommendations

39 That a province-wide evaluation be undertaken of the financial incentive scheme offered to non-status Native students by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and consideration given to ways in which the goals of this initiative could be even more completely achieved, and support offered for its expansion possibly with the cooperation of Native Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women's Association as well as the schools.

THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Recommendations

40 That a project be urgently undertaken to develop a sensitive and validated "DECISIONS" instrument for the early identification of Native students at risk of dropping out.

41 That intervention strategies appropriate to the at-risk diagnoses made by the Native-oriented "DECISIONS" instrument be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated so that an empirical information base may be developed on the optimum strategies for providing support for Native students at risk of dropping out.

STUDYING SUCCESS

Recommendations

42 That LEAs, agencies serving Metis/off-reserve Natives and the provincial schools attended by their students undertake to document local case studies describing the factors which they believe to contribute to the academic success of Native students in their specific contexts.

43 That the Ministry of Education of Ontario undertake the compilation and distribution of these case studies to provincial school boards and use them as a new and additional component in the professional training of secondary school principals.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 LIKERT ITEM QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEWEE _____ POSITION _____
PLACE _____ INTERVIEWER _____
DATE _____

ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(Prepared by Ronald Mackay, Principal Investigator)

INSTRUMENTATION: LIKERT ITEMS
(Native and non-Native Educators)

Listed below are 42 commonly expressed statements reflecting factors which may contribute to students dropping out of school. How do you feel about each of these as contributing to Native students quitting school? Base your responses on your own experience with Native students who have quit school in this school board.

1. They had difficulty with English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

2. They were getting poor grades in school exams and tests.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

3. They were kept back one or more grades.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

4. They were failing one (or more) course(s) in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

5. They were falling behind with their homework.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

6. They often didn't pay attention in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

7. They were not good at doing the work the teachers asked them to do in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

8. They were getting into trouble with teachers and/or the principal.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

9. Their teachers failed to understand them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

10. Their teachers didn't encourage them to stay on at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

11. Teachers seldom praised them or their efforts.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

12. Teachers often picked on them unjustly.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

13. Their parents didn't have much interest in how well or badly they did at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

14. Their parents didn't encourage them to stay on at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

15. The parents and the teachers of Native students didn't talk to each other enough.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

16. There was too little communication between the school and their home communities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

17. Many of their friends had already dropped out.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

18. They had few or no friends at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

19. They did not expect to finish high school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

20. They did not care whether they finished high school or not.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

21. They did not have any clear plans about what they would do after leaving school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

22. Most of the subjects taught in school didn't interest them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

23. They felt that school was of little importance to their life.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

24. They seldom took part in sports or other after-school activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

25. School seemed to be too big and impersonal for them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

26. They had to bus for quite a long time to and from school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

27. They had to live away from home (in a boarding home or a dormitory).

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

28. Many of their teachers were unable to engage their interest and participation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

29. There were too many school rules that they couldn't see the point of.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

30. They didn't have a guidance counsellor with whom they could feel really comfortable.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

31. They didn't have a professional guidance counsellor, just a regular teacher who also did some counselling.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

32. They got insufficient career counselling in the school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

33. The school didn't really care about Native students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

34. Much of the work done in class was pointless.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

35. They had to study courses that had little to do with their lives outside of school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

36. There were no courses of specific cultural relevance to them as Native people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

37. Non-Native students made them feel unwelcome at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

38. They were discriminated against by others in the school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

39. They skipped school and classes quite a lot.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

40. They left school to get married and/or have a baby.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

41. They left school because of financial problems at home.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

42. They left school in order to go on welfare.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

A. Are there any other factors which, <u>in your</u> experience, contribute to Native students dropping out of provincial schools?

B. What action, in your opinion, could help to increase the success rate of Native students in provincial schools?

C. Have you any comments to make on the content of this questionnaire?

APPENDIX 2 OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(Prepared by Ronald Mackay, Principal Investigator)

Open-Ended Interview (For use with Native and non-Native Educators.) (To be used in conjunction with the completed Likert Items with each interviewee.)

I'd like to tape record what you have to say so that I don't miss any of it. I don't want to take the chance of relying on my notes and thereby miss something that you say or inadvertently change your words somehow. So, if you don't mind, I'd very much like to use the recorder. If at any time during the interview you would like to turn the tape recorder off, all you have to do is press this button, and the recorder will stop.

I would like you to tell me more about why you think that Native students drop out of school without graduating.

We will use the statements that you agreed with here (indicates completed Lickert Items) as a guide to organize the rest of our interview.

Items 1 and 2 deal with language. How can language influence a Native student's decision to drop out of school?

Items 3 through 9 deal with academic achievement. You strongly agreed with statement 4 as a reason for Native students quitting school. Could you expand on that for me?

Items 10 through 17 deal with relationships between students and the school staff. What more can you tell me about the reasons you strongly agreed with? Take No. 10, for example.

Items 18 through 21 deal with home and home-school factors.

Items 22 and 23 deal with student-student relationships.

Items 24, 25 and 26 deal with a student's plans for the future.

Items 27 through 42 deal with school related factors. Let's look at 27 first, it deals with student interest in the curriculum. You strongly agreed with the statement. Can you expand on that for me?

Items 43 and 44 deal with discrimination.

Item 45 deals with truancy or repeated absence from school.

The last item is based on the observation that girls frequently leave school because they're going to have a baby. You agreed/strongly agreed with this as a reason in your own experience. Can you tell me more about this?

O.K., now we've talked about the problems that are commonly given as reasons for dropping out of school. In your experience, are there any
other reasons that influence Native students to quit school?

In your experience are the reasons for dropping out the same for Metis (and Non-Status) students as they are for Status Indians?

Have you observed any patterns there at all?

What about the reasons non-Natives have for dropping out? Are they the same or different in your experience?

APPENDIX 3 LETTER TO BAND EDUCATION/SOCIAL COUNSELLORS

Fern Hill
R.R. #1 Bailieboro
Ontario K0L 1B0

July 22, 1988

Dear

The Ontario Ministry of Education has asked me to conduct a study of Native dropouts in the Province of Ontario. The purpose of the study is to better understand the reasons why many Native students drop out of high school prior to obtaining their diploma, so that the current situation might be improved.

So far, we have talked to administrators, teachers and guidance counsellors from various school boards in order to obtain their views.

We are sure that young people belonging to your band, who have dropped out of school would like to express their views on why they did not complete school. They may also want to suggest changes in schools, teaching and materials, etc., that might make a positive difference to Native students.

In addition, the parents of these students may also want to make their voices heard.

We would like you to tell us how best to obtain the views of Native students who dropped out in the past two or three years (and those of interested parents).

We are available to visit your region this summer/fall to talk to those who would like to express their views. An alternative might be for us to pay a member of your band to interview interested students and parents for us.

We would appreciate your suggestions in the near future and enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your reply. Or you can telephone me at 705-939-6831 to leave a message.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald Mackay
Principal Investigator
Ontario Native Dropout Study

APPENDIX 4 LETTER/QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL PROVINCIAL SCHOOL BOARDS IN ONTARIO

Fern Hill
R.R. #1, Bailieboro
Ontario
K0L 1B0
Tel: (705) 939-6831

August 15, 1988

Dear

Ontario Native Student Dropout Study

The Ontario Ministry of Education is committed to reducing the general dropout rate in Ontario schools. Native students appear to drop out of school at a higher rate than the general population. I have been requested by the Ministry of Education to determine the rate of and the factors contributing to Native student dropout from Ontario provincial schools. The Supervisory Official is Mr. Keith Lickers, 16th Floor, Mowat Block, Queen's Park, Toronto M7A 1L2, Tel: (416) 965-9672.

Our research to date in a small number of boards across the Province indicates that the situation regarding Native students varies widely from board to board. We are now, therefore, inviting each board individually to contribute directly to the overall picture. This board-by-board approach has been adopted so that any remedial action or support that the Ministry may decide to give as a result of this study can be directed to boards in the most appropriate manner.

If Native students dropping out of school is not a concern in your Board, please complete the first question on the attached sheets and return it to us in the stamped addressed envelope right away.

If this is an issue of concern in your Board please answer all ten questions and return the completed sheets to us in the stamped addressed envelope provided, by 2nd September, 1988. Please feel free to attach any additional comments you may wish to make about this issue, or copies of any resolutions, plans, surveys, etc. proposed or carried out by your Board. I may be contacted at the telephone number at the head of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald Mackay, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Ref. SB-1-8RM

Ontario Native Student Dropout Study

1. Is the Native student dropout rate a concern in your school board? YES NO

2. How many Native students were registered in secondary schools your school board in:

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Status Indians Resident on Reserve			
Other Native students (i.e., Status Indians resident off-reserve, Non-status Indians, Metis, Inuit.)			

3. How many of these Native students graduated with a secondary school diploma in:

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Status Indians Resident on Reserve			
Other Natives			

4. How many of these Native students dropped out of secondary school in:

			1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Status Indians on Reserve	Gr.9	Basic			
		General			
		Advanced			
	Gr.10	Basic			
		General			
		Advanced			
	Gr.11	Basic			
		General			
		Advanced			
	Gr.12	Basic			
		General			
		Advanced			
	Gr. 13				
Other Natives					

5. How has your Board's concern for Native students dropping out been expressed? (e.g., discussed at Board Meetings)

6. What action has been taken by your School Board to address this concern? (Give as many details as you can. Include copies of any resolutions, policies, plans, etc. you think would help us to understand the action you have taken.)

7. How effective has this action been?

8. In your view, are there any obstacles faced by your School Board in successfully dealing with the Native dropout issue? What are they?

9. What could be done to support or expand your efforts to encourage more Native students to remain in secondary school until they obtain a diploma?

10. Is there anything at all that you would like to add concerning Native students dropping out of schools in your School Board?

Ronald Mackay, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
August, 1988

APPENDIX 5 LETTER/QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL FIRST NATIONS IN ONTARIO

Fern Hill
Bailieboro
Ontario
Canada
K0L 1B0

August 15, 1988

Dear

The Ontario Ministry of Education is committed to increasing the success of Native students in Provincial schools. To meet this committment it is important for the Ministry of Education to understand the various factors which result in Native students leaving school before obtaining a secondary school graduation diploma.

I have been asked by the Ministry of Education to determine the rate and the causes of Native student dropout from provincial schools and to offer constructive suggestions which are grounded in the views of those closest to the problem. The supervisory official is Mr. Keith Lickers, 16th Floor, Mowatt Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, M7A 1L2. Tel. (416) 965 9672.

So far we have examined graduation statistics for the province of Ontario and have held interviews and discussions with a number of teachers, counsellors, Native Assistants, Principals and Directors of Education in various school boards throughout the province.

It is important that Bands and other Native groups make their voices heard on this matter. We are, therefore, inviting your Band to express its views as to the causes of the Native student dropout rate and to offer suggestions as to what might be done to encourage your students to stay in school to obtain their secondary school graduation diplomas.

This band-by-band approach has been adopted so that any remedial action or support that may be offered as a result of this study, can be directed in the most appropriate way.

Should your Band for any reason not want its voice to be heard on the matter of school dropouts, please check the box below and return this letter in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed, by 31st August, 1988.

No, the _____Band does not want to contribute its views on Native dropouts from provincial schools to this study.

If your Band <u>does</u> wish to express its views, concerns and suggestions on this matter, please answer the attached 11 questions and return these to me in the stamped addressed envelope by 2nd September, 1988.

Yours sincerely,
Ronald Mackay, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Ronald Mackay
Fern Hill
Bailieboro
Ontario
K0L 1B0
(705) 939-683

Ref. NB-1-8RM

Ontario Native Dropout Study

1. Is students dropping out of provincial secondary schools a concern in your Band? YES NO
2. How many students from your Band didn't continue with school after completing Grade 8?

   1985-86 1986-87 1987-88
3. How many students from your Band were registered in a Provincial secondary school between Grades 9 and 13 in:

   1985-86 1986-87 1987-88
4. How many of these students graduated with a secondary school diploma in:

   1985-86 1986-87 1987-88
5. How many of these students dropped out before obtaining a secondary school graduation diploma in:

   1985-86 1986-87 1987-88
6. What has your Band done to address the dropout issue? (Give as many details as you can. Please enclose copies of any resolutions, minutes, policies, plans, studies you think might help us to understand the action you have taken.)
7. How effective has this action been?
8. In your view are there any obstacles faced by your Band in successfully dealing with the dropout issue? What are they?
9. What could be done to support or expand your efforts to encourage more of your children to remain in school and obtain a graduation diploma?

10. Would you be willing to arrange for this researcher to interview students in your Band

a) who have successfully obtained their secondary school graduation diploma YES/NO

and b) who have dropped out of school before obtaining their secondary school diploma YES/NO

c) parents of graduates and of dropouts YES/NO

Alternatively, would you be willing to conduct a number of interviews for us if we send you the interview schedule and a cassette tape?

(There is a $20 fee for each completed interview.) YES/NO

11. Is there anything at all you would like to add concerning Native students dropping out of secondary schools?

Ronald Mackay
Principal Investigator
August, 1988

APPENDIX 6 LETTER TO NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS IN ONTARIO

Fern Hill
R.R. #1 Bailieboro
Ontario K0L 1B0

21 October 1988

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting a study the purpose of which is to examine the Native student dropout issue from Ontario public secondary schools and to report suggestions for strategies for maximizing Native student success at school. The study is being conducted on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Education; my supervisory officer is Mr. Keith Lickers, 16th Floor, Mowat Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2 Tel. (416) 965-9672.

In the process of conducting this study, the name of your organization has cropped up several times. We would like to invite you to contribute information which we might incorporate in our report. In particular, we would like to know:

1. if your organization has formally addressed the issue of the numbers of Natives who graduate or do not graduate from Ontario public secondary schools, and

2. if your organization is directly or indirectly involved in dealing with potential Native dropouts or students who have already dropped out.

We would be more than pleased to receive from your organization any policy statements, studies or recommendations relating to this issue, or any thoughts, concerns and suggestions you have on these matters which you feel should be reflected in our report.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald Mackay
Principal Investigator
Ontario Native Dropout Study

RM:lq

APPENDIX 7 SUCCESS INTERVIEW

ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(Prepared by Ronald Mackay, Principal Investigator)

SUCCESS AT SCHOOL

(Seconday School students (Gr. 12,13) High School Graduates)

1. What has helped you most to reach the level you have in school?

   1.1 Help you've had from home, family, community

   1.2 Ways you have helped yourself

   1.3 Help you've had from teachers, counsellors, others at school

   1.4 Help you've had from good experiences at school e.g. good courses, activities, friends

   1.5 Other?

2. What obstacles have you had to overcome or fight against to be successful?

   2.1 Obstacles in yourself

   2.2 Obstacles at home, in the family, community

   2.3 Obstacles at school (teachers, staff, others, courses, homework)

   2.4 Other obstacles you've had to overcome?

3. If you were asked what might be changed to make it easier for you to be successful at school, what would you suggest?

RM:lq
09.09.88

APPENDIX 8 SUCCESS QUESTIONNAIRE IN TWO PARTS: HELP AND OBSTACLES

ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(Prepared by Ronald Mackay, Principal Investigator)
(Open Comments, HELP)

In your opinion, how can Native students be helped to be successful at school, that is, how can they be helped to graduate from high school?

BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN ABOUT WHAT KIND OF HELP YOU BELIEVE COULD BE EXPECTED FROM:

1. THE STUDENT HIMSELF/HERSELF

2. THE STUDENT'S FAMILY

3. THE STUDENT'S RESERVE OR COMMUNITY

4. THE TEACHERS

5. THE SCHOOL

6. OTHER SOURCE OF HELP OR SUPPORT

RM:lq 11.10.88

ONTARIO NATIVE STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY
ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(Prepared by Ronald Mackay, Principal Investigator)
(Open Comments, OBSTACLES)

A high proportion of Native students drop out of school before completing Grade 12. In your opinion, what obstacles face Native students at the level of:

1. THE STUDENT HIMSELF/HERSELF

2. THE STUDENT'S FAMILY

3. THE STUDENT'S RESERVE OR COMMUNITY

4. THE TEACHERS

5. THE SCHOOL

6. OTHER OBSTACLES

RM:lq 11.10.88

APPENDIX 9

DECISIONS QUESTIONNAIRE
(COPYRIGHT 1989 PIERRE QUIROUETTE)

1. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT.

(2) DO YOU LIVE WITH YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER?
- A) YES, WITH MY MOTHER AND MY FATHER (OR STEPMOTHER OR STEPFATHER).
- B) NO, WITH MY MOTHER.
- C) NO, WITH MY FATHER.
- D) OTHER.

(5) HOW MUCH EDUCATION DOES YOUR MOTHER HAVE?
- A) ATTENDED COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.
- B) FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL.
- C) A FEW YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL.
- D) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
- E) I DO NOT KNOW.

(6) HOW MUCH EDUCATION DOES YOUR FATHER HAVE?
- A) ATTENDED COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.
- B) FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL.
- C) A FEW YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL.
- D) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
- E) I DO NOT KNOW.

(12) DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS, HAVE EITHER OF YOUR PARENTS BEEN OUT OF WORK? (EXCEPT HOMEMAKERS OR FOR HEALTH REASONS)
- A) NO.
- B) YES, BOTH MY MOTHER AND FATHER.
- C) YES, MY FATHER.
- D) YES, MY MOTHER.
- E) I DON'T KNOW.

(18) IN COMPARISON WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS IN MY CLASS, I THINK MY FAMILY'S FINANCIAL SITUATION IS:
- A) BETTER THAN THEIRS.
- B) LESS FAVOURABLE THAN THEIRS.
- C) THE SAME AS THEIRS.

(24) WOULD YOU PREFER TO LIVE ELSEWHERE THAN WITH YOUR PARENTS?
- A) NO.
- B) MAYBE.
- C) YES.
- D) I DON'T LIVE WITH MY PARENTS.

(28) HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR FAMILY DO INTERESTING ACTIVITIES TOGETHER?
A) NEVER.
B) RARELY.
C) SOMETIMES.
D) OFTEN.

2. PERSONAL TRAITS.

(7) HOW DO YOU FEEL MOST OF THE TIME?
A) VERY HAPPY.
B) SOMEWHAT HAPPY.
C) NOT VERY HAPPY.
D) UNHAPPY.

(13) DO YOU COMPLETE WHATEVER YOU UNDERTAKE?
A) ALWAYS.
B) USUALLY.
C) SOMETIMES.
D) RARELY.

(19) DO YOU FEEL LONELY?
A) NEVER.
B) RARELY.
C) SOMETIMES.
D) REGULARLY.
E) ALWAYS.

(25) ARE YOU MORE SUCCESSFUL IN WHAT YOU DO OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL THAN YOU ARE WITH YOUR SCHOOL WORK?
A) ALWAYS.
B) MOST OF THE TIME.
C) SOMETIMES.
D) RARELY.
E) NEVER.

(36) DO YOU FEEL THAT PEOPLE UNDERSTAND YOU?
A) GENERALLY.
B) SOMETIMES.
C) RARELY.
D) NEVER.

3. EDUCATIONAL PLANS.

(8) WHAT LEVEL OF EDUCATION DO YOU WANT TO REACH?
A) UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.
B) COLLEGE EDUCATION.
C) FINISH HIGH SCHOOL.
D) I DON'T THINK I'LL FINISH HIGH SCHOOL.
E) I WOULD LIKE TO QUIT SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

(14) ARE YOU READY TO QUIT SCHOOL AND GO TO WORK FULL TIME?
A) I'M NOT READY AT ALL.
B) I'M READY ENOUGH.
C) I'M TOTALLY READY.

(20) DO YOU INTEND TO FINISH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL?
A) CERTAINLY
B) PROBABLY.
C) MAYBE.
D) NOT AT ALL.

(27) WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE A FULL TIME JOB INSTEAD OF GOING TO SCHOOL?
A) YES.
B) MAYBE.
C) NO.

(31) IF YOUR PARENTS (OR GUARDIANS) WOULD ALLOW YOU TO QUIT SCHOOL, WOULD YOU?
A) NO.
B) MAYBE.
C) YES.

4. SCHOOL ABILITIES.

(4) LAST YEAR, WHAT WAS YOUR OVERALL AVERAGE IN SCHOOL?
A) 80% OR MORE.
B) 70 - 79%.
C) 60 - 69%.
D) 50 - 59%.
E) LESS THAN 49%.

(9) DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS, HOW HAVE YOUR RESULTS BEEN IN SCHOOL?
A) VERY SATISFACTORY.
B) SATISFACTORY.
C) UNSATISFACTORY.
D) TOTALLY UNSATISFACTORY.

(15) HOW IS YOUR ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE AND PAY ATTENTION DURING CLASSES?
A) VERY GOOD.
B) GOOD.
C) NOT SO GOOD.
D) POOR.

(21) HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DO YOUR SPEND DOING YOUR HOMEWORK?
A) MORE THAN 10 HOURS A WEEK.
B) FROM 6 TO 10 HOURS A WEEK.
C) FROM 2 TO 5 HOURS A WEEK.
D) LESS THAN 2 HOURS A WEEK.
E) NONE.

(29) THIS YEAR, DO YOU EXPECT TO FAIL AT LEAST TWO SUBJECTS?
A) PROBABLY.
B) I DON'T KNOW.
C) NO.

(33) DO YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES IN CLASS?
A) I AM VERY CONFIDENT.
B) I AM CONFIDENT ENOUGH.
C) I HAVE LITTLE CONFIDENCE.
D) I AM NOT CONFIDENT AT ALL.

(35) IF YOU WERE GOING TO FAIL THIS YEAR, WOULD YOU PREFER TO QUIT SCHOOL?
A) NO, NOT AT ALL.
B) MAYBE.
C) PROBABLY.
D) YES.

5. TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP.

(3) HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MOST OF YOUR TEACHERS?
A) VERY GOOD.
B) GOOD.
C) NOT SO GOOD.
D) POOR.

(10) WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL, DO TEACHERS ENCOURAGE YOU?
A) OFTEN.
B) SOMETIMES.
C) RARELY.
D) NEVER.

(16) GENERALLY, DO YOU THINK YOUR TEACHERS UNDERSTAND YOU?
A) VERY WELL.
B) WELL ENOUGH.
C) NOT SO WELL.
D) NOT AT ALL.

(22) WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS, ARE THERE TEACHERS WHO MAKE AN EFFORT TO HELP YOU?
A) MOST TEACHERS.
B) SOME TEACHERS.
C) FEW TEACHERS.
D) NO TEACHERS.

(26) CAN YOU COUNT ON YOUR TEACHERS TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR SCHOOL PROBLEMS?

A) MOST OF THE TIME.
B) SOMETIMES.
C) RARELY.
D) NEVER.

(30) DO TEACHERS MOTIVATE YOU TO LEARN?

A) A LOT.
B) A LITTLE.
C) VERY LITTLE.
D) NOT AT ALL.

6. MOTIVATION FOR SCHOOL.

(1) GENERALLY, DO YOU LIKE TO GO TO SCHOOL?

A) I LIKE SCHOOL.
B) I LIKE SCHOOL MORE OR LESS.
C) I DON'T CARE.
D) I DON'T LIKE SCHOOL.
E) I HATE SCHOOL.

(11) IF YOU WERE PAID TO GO TO SCHOOL, WOULD YOU SKIP SCHOOL LESS OFTEN?

A) CERTAINLY.
B) PROBABLY.
C) I DON'T THINK SO.
D) I NEVER SKIP SCHOOL.

(17) HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU DON'T DO WELL IN TESTS OR EXAMS?

A) IT PUSHES ME TO WORK HARDER.
B) IT DISCOURAGES ME A BIT.
C) IT DISCOURAGES ME A LOT, I FEEL LIKE QUITTING.
D) I DON'T CARE.

(23) DO YOU LIKE THE SUBJECTS THAT YOU MUST STUDY AT SCHOOL?

A) I LIKE MY SUBJECTS VERY MUCH.
B) I SORT OF LIKE MY SUBJECTS.
C) I DON'T LIKE MY SUBJECTS VERY MUCH.
D) I DON'T LIKE MY SUBJECTS AT ALL.

(32) WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE THE SUBJECTS YOU ARE NOW TAKING?

A) I WOULDN'T CHANGE ANY SUBJECTS.
B) I WOULD CHANGE A FEW SUBJECTS.
C) I WOULD CHANGE MOST OF MY SUBJECTS.
D) I WOULD CHANGE ALL MY SUBJECTS.

(34) IN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU SKIPPED CLASSES?

A) NEVER.
B) ONCE OR TWICE.
C) A NUMBER OF TIMES.
D) VERY OFTEN.

Appendix 10 REVIEW OF THE DROPOUT LITERATURE

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Family Background

Family background is the most thoroughly investigated issue in research on the dropout problem. Since the family characteristics that are predictive of dropping out are so well established and since educationists have realized that there is little they can do to alter the family background of high-risk students, research has shifted its emphasis from trying to establish a correlation between certain family-related characteristics and dropping out. Educators investigating the dropout problem are now attempting to understand the complex interaction between what the student brings to the school environment and what the school environment imposes on the student.

Since there is considerable information available on the family background of Native people, it is possible, to some extent, to connect many of the variables that are known to be associated with dropping out to the family background of Native people. However, it is important to note that we have found almost no research on the relationship between either the language background/use or the cultural identity of Native people and the dropout problem. It is possible that these may prove to be important factors and so should be further investigated.

The almost universal finding in dropout research is that children from families of low socioeconomic status (as measured by income, occupational status, and the parents' educational level) are more likely to dropout than children from a family of high socioeconomic status. A high proportion of Native people fall into the low socioeconomic status category.

A high proportion of dropouts come from single-parent families. It is suggested that this may be because a single parent has less time to encourage children with school, less time to monitor the child's activities, and may also be under greater economic pressure. A higher proportion of Native families have only one parent as compared to the general population.

Many dropouts come from large families. This fact may be related to the two we have just mentioned: large families are usually under greater financial pressure and parents may have less time to supervise their children because of the large family. It has been found that Native families tend to be larger than those of the general population.

The risk of dropping out appears to increase with the number of hours a student works at a part-time job. No information is available on whether the effect of economic activity, such as time Native students spend hunting, fishing, and trapping, influences school completion.

Parents of dropouts tend to have lower levels of education than the parents of children who stay in school. Indeed dropping out may become a family tradition. The parents of Native children tend to have lower educational levels than the general population.

The attitude of parents and their involvement with their children's education is related to dropping out. The parents of dropouts have been found to have had a negative attitude towards school and to offer their children little encouragement. This negative attitude may be connected with the parents' own experience in the educational system.

It has been found that dropouts have fewer educationally related materials such as books, dictionaries, or encyclopedias in their homes. Moreover, they are offered fewer opportunities for non-school related learning experiences such as visits to museums or exhibits. Again it is likely that the absence of educational materials in the home and the dearth of non-school related educational experiences are related to the parents' own low educational attainment.

Finally, it has been found that the brothers and sisters of dropouts are themselves often also dropouts. This high rate of dropouts within the same family may be a reflection of a number of the factors discussed above.

Studies have consistently shown that students belonging to racial and ethnic minorities such as Native peoples are more likely to drop out of school.

In addition, it has been found that students from language minority backgrounds are more likely to eventually drop out without completing school. Children who speak English as a second language may encounter difficulty with the language of the school and over time find themselves unable to cope. Even where students have an adequate command of English for their daily purposes, it may be that their knowledge of the language does not allow them to handle academic-type tasks. This may in turn discourage them from continuing in school.

The role of cultural identity in the dropping out process is little understood. However, it is well known that for some groups the tradition of formal schooling where children are taught by professional teachers in groups is quite foreign to their culture.

Second, some groups have fundamental views of the world which may be at odds with "mainstream" culture. Problems can arise if the teacher (usually from an alien culture) is insensitive to or unaware of the premises under which a minority student is operating.

Unless the educational system is sensitive to these differences and makes efforts to accommodate these divergent world views, many students from such backgrounds may not so much actively drop out but find themselves pushed out by an inflexible and insensitive system. One of the main difficulties in researching the role of cultural identity in dropping out is that of defining and operationalizing the concept of "culture".

Personal Characteristics and Attitudes

Many studies show that Native people leave school at a much earlier age and with fewer grades completed than the general population. Moreover, Native students begin dropping out of school even in elementary grades, with larger numbers dropping out at the crucial transition phases between the elementary and intermediate divisions and between the intermediate and senior divisions. It has been suggested that students whose mother tongue is not the language of the school are susceptible to dropping out at these transition phases.

Male dropouts outnumber female dropouts. Males tend to report dropping out for school-related and economic reasons, while females often drop out because of pregnancy or marriage as well as these other reasons. The male/female ratio among Metis/non-status dropouts is found to be consistent with that of the general population. However, one study indicated that females outnumber male dropouts among status Indians.

Scores on standardized intelligence tests are not predictive of which students will eventually drop out. However, language ability is consistently related to academic achievement. Poor achievement, in turn, is connected to dropping out.

Some studies show that potential dropouts and high risk students have a feeling that their destiny is out of their hands. This feeling appears to decrease after they drop out and begin to experience a greater control over their lives, at least in the short term. Likewise, and again at least in the short term these adolescents' sense of self-esteem may increase immediately after dropping out.

Many dropouts have friends who are also dropouts which suggests that they may share similar attitudes towards school. In general, dropouts feel that they are unpopular and that they are regarded as poor students or trouble-makers by their classmates.

Dropouts usually have lower expectations about how far they will go in school than do students who stay; however, most dropouts expect to finish high school. Very few studies investigate the kind of job or career dropouts expect to pursue. It may be that students who do not see in their immediate environment that they have much opportunity for a good job may be inclined to dismiss school as irrelevant and so leave early.

Academic Characteristics

Dropouts tend to have a previous history of academic failure: while in school, they failed tests and received failing grades in courses. Because of this, they were more likely to be one or more years behind students of their own age group. This problem of grade retention is especially severe for Native students.

Dropouts often express disinterest and dissatisfaction with life at school. This is especially true of Native students who report that they are not interested in the content of their courses and who also feel a general alienation from the school environment.

Dropouts are often absent from school and skip individual classes. They also report doing much less homework per week than do students who graduate.

Dropouts tend to have more discipline problems that result in their being suspended or placed on probation. They are also more likely to have had serious problems with the law. Finally, dropouts have lower levels of participation in most extra-curricular activities. This is interpreted as being symptomatic of the dropout's overall alienation with life at school.

School Climate

School climate refers to the aggregate of physical characteristics, human characteristics, and dynamic processes which together make up the total school environment. Although there has been little research investigating the effect of school climate on high risk students, the recommendations found in almost all dropout studies call for changes in the school climate. Since there seems to be little that educational decision-makers can doto change factors in the family background of at risk students or their personal and academic characteristics, an approach suggesting modifications to school climate over which educators do have control has intuitive appeal. However, recommendations for changes in school climate are, by and large, ad hoc in the sense that they are not based on any direct or indirect measures of the effect of school climate on the high-risk student's decision to drop out. The critical question that emerges in the literature, and remains still to be addresed, is "How much do schools contribute to the dropout problem?".

Since this question has not been investigated systematically but tends to be addressed only tangentially, we have organized these sundry observations according to the taxonomy offered in Anderson (1982). We will briefly discuss the variables which are

grouped under four headings: school ecology, milieu, social context, and culture.

The size of the school, an 'ecology' variable, was found to be a factor in the NADC study: large schools were perceived as impersonal and alienating. The absence of schools in rural areas may create problems for students with transportation and boarding which may in turn be factors in dropping out.

Aspects related to 'milieu' include the aggregate of teacher characteristics, training, and morale. Several studies found that the humanistic, caring characteristics of teachers were important variables on whether high-risk students dropped out or not. Postings to remote or culturally different areas may have an effect on teacher morale and, consequently, their relationships with students. Low teacher morale may lead to a high teacher-turnover rate and, thereby, affect the continuity of student-teacher relationships. The characteristics of the student body of a school, including morale, are also grouped under 'milieu'. Alienation and dissatisfaction, characteristics which are reported as pervasive among Indian and Metis students, may be related to aspects of school climate which are discussed under 'culture' variables.

Student teacher interaction is one of the crucial social context variables. As suggested above, certain types of teacher-student interaction have been consistently linked to dropping out. Several studies have reported that "uncaring" attitudes perceived in their teachers by high-risk students have contributed to a decision to drop out before completing school.

The studies on Native dropouts are unanimous in urging the improvement of the relationships between parents, communities as a whole and the school as an institution. The importance of personal and career counselling is discussed in several studies. Most studies on Native dropouts conclude that Native counsellors would more effectively help high-risk Native students, although this view is not supported by any empirical evidence.

Several important culture variables were found in the studies of Native dropouts. These noted a certain tension between the non-Native middle class values that pervade the school system and

Native values and culture. A perceived lack of effectiveness and fairness in the school's authority structure was found to contribute to dropping out. Repeated failure of students at some or all of the kinds of tasks the educational system sets for them can lead to a feeling that the school has rejected them. It is felt that there may be a negative relationship between the culturally influenced behaviour of Native students and the kinds of tasks and types of performance required by the educational institutions in which they study.

REVIEW OF THE DROPOUT LITERATURE

1. Family Background

1.1.1 Parents' Occupation/Income

1.1.2 Single Parent

1.1.3 Family Size

1.1.4 Employment during School

1.2 Parents' Educational Level

1.2.1 Parents' Involvement and Attitude towards Education

1.2.2 Educational Materials in the Home

1.2.3 Sibling Dropouts

1.3 Race/Ethnicity

1.3.1 Language Background/Use

1.3.2 Cultural Identity

2. Personal Characteristics and Attitudes

2.1.1 Age

2.1.2 Sex

2.2.1 Intelligence

2.2.2 Language Ability

2.2.3 Locus of Control

2.2.4 Self Esteem/Confidence

2.2.5 Relation to Peers

2.3.1 Educational Expectations/Aspirations

2.3.2 Occupational Expectations

3. Academic Characteristics

3.1 Low Achievement/Failure

3.2 Grade Retention

3.3 Disinterest/Dissatisfaction with School

3.3.1 Attendance

3.3.2 Homework

3.3.3 Discipline

3.3.4 Extracurricular Activities

4. School Climate

4.1 Ecology (School Characteristics)

4.1.1 Size

4.1.2 Urban/Rural

4.1.3 Transportation

4.1.4 Boarding

4.2 Milieu

4.2.1 Teacher Characteristics and Training

4.2.2 Teacher Morale/Turnover

4.2.3 Student Body Characteristics and Morale

4.3 Social System Variables

4.3.1 Student-Teacher Interaction

4.3.2 Community-School Relationships

4.3.3 Counsellors

4.4 Culture Variables

4.4.1 Ideology/Values

4.4.2 Authority Structure

4.4.3 Reward Structure

4.4.4 Task Structure

4.4.5 Curricular Responsiveness

References

INTRODUCTION

Research into the causes and consequences of dropping out has been a major concern of education research for many decades. Until recently, these studies have focused almost exclusively on the family background and personal characteristics which the eventual dropout brings to the school environment. The primary goal of this research trend has been to identify those variables in the student's make up which are most predictive of dropping out. Usually, students who have dropped out of school are compared with those who graduate or go on to postsecondary studies. The research attempts to provide an explanation for the fact that some students leave and others stay by examining the significant differences in the family background or the personal make up of the individual who leaves or remains in school until graduation.

A second goal of this research has been to identify students who are at risk of dropping out. It is assumed that the identification of "high-risk" students will permit teachers, counsellors, and school administrators to intervene somehow in the student's ultimate decision to remain in school or to leave. The four sections below examine some of the variables and factors which are investigated in studies of dropouts and which are thought to be important in the process of dropping out. The first section looks at the factors and variables related to family background, the second looks at the individual's personal characteristics and attitudes, the third examines the academic characteristics of the high-risk student, while the last section examines the effect of school climate on dropping out.

1. Family Background

For our purposes, the variables and factors discussed under family background will be organized under three headings: 1) socioeconomic status, 2) parents' educational level, and 3) race/ethnicity.

1.1 Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Almost all the studies reviewed give importance to socioeconomic status as a factor in the dynamics of dropping out. In a comprehensive review of issues and trends, Rumberger observes

that numerous studies have found that "dropout rates are higher for students from families of low socioeconomic status, no matter what particular factors are used to measure socioeconomic status" (1987:110).

Ekstrom et al. (1986), using the largest and most comprehensive data-base presently available (the "High School and Beyond" [HSB study]), found that the two background characteristics most strongly related to dropping out are socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. Their findings in this regard are consistently supported by other studies which show that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have higher dropout rates than students from "higher" socioeconomic backgrounds.

The only study to reject the "classic" image of the dropout as a person from a background of poverty and ignorance is Cicely Watson's study (1976) of dropouts in the province of Ontario. While she notes that there is a sub-group for whom this description is adequate, by and large, the families of dropouts compare favourably with the average Ontario family in most of the measures of SES: occupational status, income, and educational level (1976:267-269). It is worth noting that this sample did not include any Native people. In the next few sections, we will look at these and other measures of SES.

1.1.1 Parents' Occupation/Income

Using the Census of Canada occupational classifications, Watson found that the occupational status of the fathers of dropouts was not significantly different from the general Ontario male population of the same age. Although the median family income among the dropouts was lower than the provincial average ($11,500 vs. $14,000), this figure, according to Watson, does not reflect severe economic hardship. On the other hand, Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978:267) found evidence to support the classic finding that students from families with lower incomes had much higher dropout rates. Ekstrom et al. (1986:358) found that the mothers of dropouts were more likely to be working - a finding which may indicate economic pressures.

Of the four studies in our review that are specifically concerned with North American Indians or Metis, three consider socioeconomic background, although this is not controlled as a variable. Davids (1963), in attempting to identify specific causes for the high Native dropout rate, raises the question of whether there are additional factors, not common to other groups with low socioeconomic status, that might contribute to the dropout rate. Bass and Tonjes (1970), in a comparison between dropouts and graduates of Native origin, found that only one father in three among both groups earned more than $3,000 p.a. and only about one-half were regularly employed.

Schwager (1974), who investigated the educational levels and attrition rates among Metis and non-status Indians in ten communities in northern Ontario, discovered that 56 per cent of the parents (male and female) were unemployed. Although he asserts that it is impossible to compare these figures with national averages, he feels "it is safe to assume that the figures would tend to be much higher than the national average" (1974). The majority of the jobs held by the parents were classified as tertiary (28 per cent), unskilled labour (23 per cent), or skilled labour (22 per cent), with the remainder classified as professional or para-professional. Since the interviews were conducted during the summer months and many were employed in seasonal jobs, Schwager speculates the situation was probably much worse during the winter months.

1.1.2 Single Parent

Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts were less likely to have both natural parents living at home. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978:307) found that only 54 per cent of dropouts were living with both parents compared to 90 per cent of non-dropouts. Steinberg et al. (1984) note that single parenthood is consistently seen to be a variable related to high dropout rates. The implication seems to be that children from single parent families are likely to be under greater economic pressure to contribute to the family income.

1.1.3 Family Size

Another factor that has bearing on the socioeconomic climate of dropouts is family size. As Watson (1976) points out, even

though a lower family income of $11,500 for dropouts does not necessarily make a family poor, if "we consider income in relation to the number of dependents we would have to add, however, that a larger proportion should be classified as poor - perhaps as high as 24 per cent" (269). In her study the average family size of the dropout is 4.3 versus 3.6 - a fact which upholds the classic dropout finding. Both Ekstrom et al. and Steinberg et al. note the consistent finding in previous studies that dropouts are more likely to come from large families. Although Schwager does not investigate family size as an independent variable associated with dropping out, he estimates the family size of his Metis and non-status Indian population to be 4 in number.

1.1.4 Employment during School

A number of researchers have pointed out the role of employment during school as a factor in dropping out (see Ekstrom et al., 1986:357). Ekstrom et al. observed that dropouts were more likely to be working (47 per cent vs. 42 per cent) and more likely to prefer their jobs to school (66 per cent vs. 54 per cent). Finally, dropouts reported working more hours per week and receiving a higher hourly wage (1986:361-62). Watson's study showed that 28 per cent of students left because they preferred working to school, while another 12 per cent felt they had to work because of economic pressure. Although it has not been investigated, some Native students may have engaged in economic activities such as hunting, trapping, and fishing to the detriment of their school work.

1.2 Parents' Educational Level

In some senses, the parents' educational level is very much connected with socioeconomic status. We have separated it, however, because we feel that it is more related to the family's attitude towards education than to any subjective or objective classification of socioeconomic status. Rumberger indicates that low educational attainment levels of parents is one of the family-related factors associated with dropping out (1987:110). In Montreal, Zamanzadeh and Prince found that the parents of dropouts were almost always themselves dropouts. Watson, on the other hand,

found that the educational level of the dropouts' fathers compared favourably with the Ontario population of the same age (1976:267).

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) study (1984), which included Indians and Metis students as a subpopulation, found that 3/4 of the dropouts interviewed had parents who were dropouts. In the Bass and Tonjes' study, 20 per cent of the parents of both dropouts and graduates had no formal schooling and only one parent in seven was a high school graduate. Schwager, who also examined the educational level of Indian and Metis parents, found that about 50 per cent had left school between Grades 1 and 9 with the majority of these finishing at Grade 8 (for reasons see 4.1.2 Urban-Rural).

1.2.1 Parents' Involvement and Attitude towards Education

According to the data analyzed by Ekstrom et al. (1986:358), the parents of students who had dropped out of school were less inclined to be interested in or to monitor their children's in-school or out of school behaviour. Furthermore, they found that the mothers of dropouts had lower educational expectations for their children than did the mothers of graduates.

Watson gathered data on parents' reactions to their children's dropping out and found that 60 per cent approved of their child's decision to leave school. There was a difference between parents in rural and urban settings, with urban parents indicating greater disapproval. Watson also found that disapproval towards dropping out diminishes the higher the grade achieved.

The NADC study notes that low family encouragement with respect to schooling is a predictor of early school leaving. In Northern Ontario, Schwager investigated parents' attitudes and involvement with regard to both their own education as well as their children's. He also investigated the parents' reasons for leaving school, their interest in the curriculum, their difficulties, and whether or not <u>their</u> parents had encouraged them to stay in school.

Schwager also asked parents why they thought their children had left school and whether they felt the child had obtained sufficient education before dropping out. The reasons varied, but

64 per cent thought that their children who had left school did not have sufficient education. In comparing levels of encouragement, he found that the parents interviewed believed they offered their children more encouragement than they themselves received. Finally, many parents felt that there were insufficient means to ensure parental involvement in the school system (see 4.3.2 Community-School Relations).

1.2.2 Educational Materials in the Home

Several studies have shown that the absence of learning materials in the home is one of the family-related factors associated with dropping out (Rumberger, 1987:110). Dropouts were found generally to come from families with a weaker educational support system; they had fewer study aids in the home and less opportunity for learning outside the school environment (Ekstrom et al., 1986:358). This factor was not investigated in the studies on Native dropouts.

1.2.3 Sibling Dropouts

Some researchers have found that the likelihood of dropping out increases when brothers and sisters have dropped out. This could be related to other factors such as economic hardship or family size. In classifying dropouts, Zamanzadeh and Prince suggest that some students may drop out, all other things being equal, because it is a "family tradition" (1978:314). Watson found that among the dropouts in her sample almost half had had a brother or sister who had dropped out (1976:269). Finally, the NADC study found that most early school leavers had other family members, in addition to their parents, who had left school (1984:17).

1.3 Race/Ethnicity

After socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity are the variables most often investigated in research on the dropout problem. The general finding is that members of racial and ethnic minorities have much higher dropout rates (Rumberger, 1987:108). In the studies we have examined, two issues appear to be crucial: language background or use and cultural identity.

1.3.1 Language Background/Use

Davids (1963) notes that language difficulties for American Indians become particularly acute in postsecondary education where the high dropout rate is linked to language/cultural differences which "have resulted in marked academic retardation in those areas which require a high degree of facility in English" (1963:30). Bass and Tonjes found that the almost universal problem hindering the Indian student was the language handicap and they urged more widespread programs in English as a second language. They also found that high school graduates felt that it was very important to speak their tribal language in order to communicate with older people in the tribe. However, they found that when the Native language was rarely spoken at home, 89 per cent of the students went on to postsecondary studies as compared to 60 per cent when the Native language was dominant (1970:5).

The NADC study found that 1/3 of the dropouts interviewed spoke Cree or other languages at home (1984:17). Community members felt that there was a need for introducing Native children into school with ESL programmes. In Ontario, Schwager devoted an entire chapter to the language question. He found that English was the dominant language in most of the students' homes and most rated their ability in English as good. When asked whether they had ever been discouraged from using their Native language in school, only 10 per cent said yes. However, 51 per cent of those interviewed made no reply, a response that was interpreted as being a reflection of cultural denial on the part of the students. Further, the self-admitted weaknesses of people under forty years of age in speaking their Native language was viewed as signalling the beginning of the end for non-Status and Metis culture. On the positive side, more than 73 per cent of the informants expressed an interest in taking courses in Native languages.

1.3.2 Cultural Identity

The literature clearly points to a Native dropout rate that is substantially higher than that exhibited by the general population or, indeed, higher than that of any other ethnic group in North America. While cultural differences are frequently

mentioned in Native dropout studies, none of these studies directly examines culture as a variable. The reason for this failure to address culture directly appears to lie in the difficulty of operationalizing this concept clearly enough for it be to examined.

2. Personal Characteristics and Attitudes

2.1.1 Age

For our purposes, age is an important consideration in measuring the number of underage dropouts, that is, students leaving before they reach the legal age. The NADC study, for example, found that students leaving before the age of 16 tended to be from rural areas and that while Native students leave at approximately the same ages as non-Natives, they tend to complete fewer grades. However, the Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout (ICD) study, which included lower grade levels, found that almost 40 per cent of the Indian dropouts and 30 per cent of the Metis and Non-Status Indians left school before the age of 16 in comparison to 17 per cent of non-Native dropouts (1985:28).

2.1.2 Sex

The classic dropout finding is that males are more likely to drop out of school than females. While males are more likely to cite school-related or economic reasons for dropping out, females more often report personal reasons such as pregnancy or marriage (NADC, 1984:21; Rumberger, 1987:108-9). Watson's research supported the classic finding with a male/female dropout ratio of 58:42, but she found that males dropped out at higher grade levels.

The Saskatchewan ICD study found that over 80 per cent of 13-year-old dropouts were female, but the male/female ratio balanced out by age 15. The majority of Status Indian dropouts from all grades were female; in contrast, males out-numbered females among Metis/non-Status and among non-Native dropouts (1985:30-31).

2.2.1 Intelligence

Standardized tests of intelligence do not appear to be predictive of dropping out. Steinberg et al. dismiss the idea that the lower achievement of non-English speaking students is due to cognitive deficiencies (1984:127). However, both the NADC study and

Zamanzadeh and Prince found that the intelligence scores of dropouts tended to be somewhat lower than average.

2.2.2 Language Ability

Ekstrom et al. found that students exhibiting behavioural problems tended to be males with low verbal ability (as measured by vocabulary test scores). In testing for unrealized achievement gains which the dropouts suffered by not completing school, they found that women and minorities lost mostly in language development areas of vocabulary, reading, and writing (1986:371). Steinberg et al., as noted above, found clear and consistent evidence linking proficiency in English to academic achievement. They also point out that while many studies indicate that bilingualism may be cognitively enriching, the research provides no evidence that bilingualism in itself is associated with enhanced academic achievement (1984:124). The NADC study found that half of the early school leavers in their sample scored below 50 per cent on tests of language ability.

2.2.3 Locus of Control

Locus of control attempts to measure whether or not a person feels that he or she has control over his or her life and destiny. Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts have a more externalized sense of control which means that they are more likely than graduates to feel that their destiny is out of their hands. However, Wehlage and Rutter, using the same data base, found that the sense of being in control of one's life doesn't increase with high school graduation (except for blacks): "Unless one is very good at doing those academic tasks rewarded by schools, one is not likely to gain a greater sense of internal control through schooling" (1986:388).

2.2.4 Self Esteem/Confidence

Ekstrom et al. found that there was no significant difference between the self-esteem of school leavers or stayers. Zamanzadeh and Prince, on the other hand, found a significant difference between dropouts and stayers (58 per cent had little self-confidence vs. 10 per cent) in their measure of self-confidence (1978:307).

In contrast to both, Wehlage and Rutter, who interpreted the same data as Ekstrom et al. from a longitudinal perspective, found that dropouts began school with a slightly higher sense of self-esteem than non-college bound stayers and found that this difference actually increased after the dropouts had left school. Contrary to the view that dropping out has a negative impact on dropouts sense of self, it seems that, in some cases, leaving school may contribute to an increase in a person's self-esteem. Wehlage and Rutter offer this interpretation: "For youth who have been receiving negative signals from the school in the form of poor grades and/or unhappy experiences with the discipline system, dropping out to a different environment is a happy experience" (1986:387).

2.2.5 Relation to Peers

Although it is known that many dropouts have friends who are also dropouts and who share many of the same educational aspirations and attitudes towards school, it is not clear to what extent and in which ways peers influence the decision to leave school (Rumberger, 1987:110). Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts were less likely to feel that they were popular at school or that other students viewed them as good students. They were more likely to feel that they were regarded as trouble-makers. The chosen friends of dropouts appeared to be more alienated from the school environment than did the chosen friends of stayers (1986:360).

Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978:306) found that dropouts were either more isolated from their peers ("having no close friends") or more than normally involved ("being constantly with friends"). When asked what things they liked best about school, 60 per cent of the dropouts in the NADC study mentioned the presence of friends as compared to only 25 per cent of those who remained in school (1984:18). In addition, most of the dropouts had friends who had left school, and the authors speculate that this may have been a factor in their decision to quit.

In the Saskatchewan ICD study, Native students reported being made to feel unwelcome by other students, experiencing a high level of social isolation at school, and being the targets of name

calling and insults. Schwager found that when his Metis and non-Status interviewees mentioned discrimination as a problem, the major portion of this discrimination was between Status and non-Status children.

2.3.1 Educational Expectations/Aspirations

Ekstrom et al. found that potential dropouts had lower educational expectations than did potential stayers: stayers expected to complete 2-4 years of college while dropouts thought they would finish high school and some junior college. In Wehlage and Rutter's study, "Expected School Attainment" was the most powerful academic-related variable to discriminate potential dropouts, potential stayers, and college-bound students from each other (1986:380). However, it should be noted that all three groups, at least in the second year of high school, expected to graduate. Wehlage and Rutter hypothesize that something, probably in the school environment, must happen to dissuade these students from achieving their expectations.

Although Schwager does not study educational expectations or aspirations as an independent variable discriminating graduates from dropouts, he did attempt to measure if there was a difference between how far a person desired or aspired to go in school and how far they expected to go. While Schwager admits that there are serious validity problems with his data, it does suggest that there is a downward shift of expectations in relation to aspirations. That is, the higher the level of desired attainment (e.g., university) the lower the expectations of fulfillment.

2.3.2 Occupational Expectations

Oddly enough, there is very little research in this area. This is surprising because it would seem that there should be some kind of correlation between educational and occupational expectations. Zamanzadeh and Prince explored students' future plans and classified them as definite, realistic, and vague or non-existent. Stayers had the most definite plans, while dropouts' plans were deemed unrealistic, vague, or non-existent (1978:307). Schwager compared the occupational aspirations of the Metis and non-Status

students in his sample with the actual occupations of their parents and found a definite upwardly mobile trend.

3. Academic Characteristics

3.1 Low Achievement/Failure

Numerous studies have documented the poor academic achievement of dropouts as measured by grades, test scores, and grade retention (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986; Rumberger, 1987). Although Wehlage and Rutter found educational expectations to be the most powerful academic-related predictor of dropping out, test scores and grades were also good predictors and correlated positively with "expected school attainment" (1986:380).

In contrast, Watson found that only 28 per cent of the dropouts were failing according to her criteria. She concluded: "Dropping out is not primarily a response to failing school marks and eliminating failure will not eliminate dropouts" (1976:265). On the other hand, Zamanzadeh and Prince's data lends support to the American studies: 59 per cent of dropouts failed two or more subjects compared to only 17 per cent of non-dropouts (1978:309). The NADC study also supports these findings with almost one-half of the dropouts scoring below 50 per cent in various subjects (1984:17). Using the California Achievement Test, Bass and Tonjes found that Grade 9 American Indian students ranked at the 17th percentile and those in Grade 12 had dropped to the 14th percentile. Such standardized tests, no doubt, are culturally biased.

3.2 Grade Retention

None of the large-scale American studies used grade retention as a variable predicting dropping out. Only Steinberg et al., who reviewed issues concerning language-minority youth, noted that language-minority status is a very good predictor of grade retention. Indeed, they state that "language minority status may be a more important determinant of school achievement than ethnicity" (1984:122). Bass and Tonjes found an academic retardation of one year for students in Grade 9 and one of 3 years in Grade 12 among

students whose primary language at home was an American Indian language.

The Canadian studies which focus on ethnic minorities, particularly Natives and Metis, support these findings unequivocally. The NADC study found that while Native and Caucasian students leave at about the same ages, Native students usually complete fewer grades before dropping out. In a more detailed comparison, the Saskatchewan ICD study found that 81 per cent of Status Indians, 73.9 per cent of Metis/non-Status, and 63 per cent of non-Native students were behind the grade level for their age (1985:32). It is not clear, however, whether this is a result of grade retention or a later start at school. In any event, Indian and Metis students are leaving school at lower grade levels than non-Native students (1985:30). Although Zamanzadeh and Prince did not examine language and ethnicity, they found that there was a significant difference between dropouts and non-dropouts in the number of years failed in both elementary and secondary school (1978:308).

3.3 Disinterest/Dissatisfaction with School

Disinterest or dissatisfaction has been considered as an indicator of alienation from school life. Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts were less interested in school (60 per cent vs. 79 per cent) and less satisfied with the way their education was going (45 per cent vs. 69 per cent) than students who stayed in school (1986:360). Zamanzadeh and Prince found that dropouts reported that they paid less attention in class (8 per cent vs. 74 per cent) than did non-dropouts.

A recurrent theme in the studies involving Natives and Metis students is lack of interest in the content of education and general alienation from the school environment. This attitude towards the school experience is by far the most frequently cited reason for leaving school especially among males in general and minorities in particular. In the Saskatchewan ICD study, the reasons most often given by students for dropping out were that school was deemed to be irrelevant, that students were disinterested, or that they preferred work to continuing in school

(1985:40). In Northern Alberta, lack of interest and dissatisfaction with the school atmosphere were the attitudes most frequently expressed by dropouts (1984:20). This lack of interest and dissatisfaction would seem to be connected with four academic factors: attendance, homework, discipline, and extra-curricular activities which will be dealt with individually.

3.3.1 Attendance

Dropouts attended classes less frequently than stay-ins (Rumberger, 1987:110; Ekstrom et al., 1986:361; Wehlage and Rutter, 1986:379). Truancy, according to Ekstrom et al., is the most important discriminator between dropouts and stay-ins in what they call the "social context of schooling" function (1986:380). Skipping school was also an important discriminating variable in Zamanzadeh and Prince's study - 97 per cent of dropouts skipped school regularly compared to 7 per cent of non-dropouts (1978:308). The NADC study found that school leavers displayed poor attendance. Bass and Tonjes found that absenteeism was high among their sample of American Indian students, even eventual graduates, in the southwest.

3.3.2 Homework

Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts, not surprisingly, reported doing less homework (2.2. hours per week vs. 3.4 hours) than stayers (1986:359-60). Zamanzadeh and Prince found a similar difference in their self-reported data (1978:308).

3.3.3 Discipline

Dropouts tend to be disciplined more for behavioural problems such as being late, cutting classes, being suspended or being placed on probation as well as having serious problems with the law (Ekstrom et al., 1986:360). Wehlage and Rutter found that the existence of discipline problems was a good discriminator of dropouts, stay-ins, and college-bound students in the HSB data base. Zamanzadeh and Prince found that the dropouts in their sample had problems with teachers in elementary school and that these difficulties increased in secondary school (1978:308). The NADC study found that almost 3/4 of the dropouts reported discipline problems. The incidence of these infractions did not differ between

Native and Caucasian students although schools in urban areas were found to have more discipline problems.

3.3.4 Extra-curricular Activities

Ekstrom et al. found that dropouts had lower levels of participation in most extra-curricular activities, especially athletics (1986:360). This was interpreted as being symptomatic of the dropout's overall alienation from school life. In contrast, the NADC study found that 44 per cent of dropouts mentioned sports as one of the things they liked best about school (1984:18). Furthermore, dropouts, high-risk students, and stayers all commented that more extra-curricular activities would make school more interesting and encourage students to remain in school (1984:45).

4. School Climate

As we have seen in the introduction, the dominant trend in educational research on dropouts has been to look for explanations of early school leaving in the family background and in the personal and academic characteristics of the dropout. This research is undertaken in the hope that a better understanding of the characteristics of dropouts will allow educators to develop and implement programs that will reduce the number of early school-leavers. However, as Wehlage and Rutter observe, this research agenda, which focuses on the relatively "fixed" attributes of dropouts, does not have any obvious implications for preventative measures to keep potential dropouts in school. Furthermore, since it is not the school's fault that some students come from certain socioeconomic backgrounds or lack academic talent, "the effect of such research may well be to give schools an excuse for their lack of success with the dropout" (1986:376). It would seem that further research which simply links dropping out to student characteristics may be an unproductive approach to the problem if the outcome of the research is to be recommendations for intervention measures. But is this true? Maybe interventions can make up for inadequate encouragement at home, etc. This is especially evident if we already know that large numbers of students from a particular

background, say Hispanic or North American Indian, leave school before graduating.

In their recent study, Wehlage and Rutter (1986) asked a question that points towards a new direction in dropout research: How much do schools contribute to the dropout problem? They offer the following rationale for this redefinition of the problem: "Although schools can do nothing about students' SES or innate ability, important contributing factors to dropout that are under the control of the school may be modified to change the school conditions of marginal students" (1986:377). Unfortunately Wehlage and Rutter's data base, the High School and Beyond study, focuses primarily on the variables we have discussed in sections one to three: family background and personal and academic characteristics and attitudes. Since the data base contained very little information on school processes - the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers inside the school, Wehlage and Rutter used certain statistical procedures to squeeze out two functions - the "academic" and the "social context of school" - which they claim explain much of the variance among dropouts, stay-ins, and college-bound students. Despite the self-admitted limitations of the study and its exploratory nature, it is one of the few dropout studies that attempts to investigate the impact of school processes on the potential dropout.

Anderson's article, "The Search for School Climate: A Review of the Research" (1982), explores the theoretical and methodological issues that have emerged in investigations of school climate, a concept which includes the relatively static physical and human characteristics of the school as well as the dynamic processes in the school environment. In the sections below, we will examine the impact of school climate on the potential dropout using the taxonomy Anderson proposes: ecology, milieu, social system, and culture. These four categories will be used to organize some of the variables which Anderson's review suggests are critical in determining school climate. We will also include variables that have emerged in our study of the dropout literature which seem to be pertinent to school climate.

4.1 Ecology Variables (School Characteristics)

The school characteristics discussed here include the physical and material aspects that shape the environment. While size and geographic location are static attributes, they are related to school-related processes such as the need for transportation or boarding.

4.1.1 Size

Several studies have shown that school size has an impact on school outcomes. In general, the finding is that smaller schools tend to have better student behaviour, more positive academic outcomes, and were perceived by students as friendlier and more cohesive.

Only one of the studies included in our review considered school size as a factor in dropping out. The NADC study found that over 75 per cent of the people interviewed felt that school size contributed to the dropout rate (1984:37). Specifically, large schools were perceived as impersonal by parents and educators. One might hypothesize that school size interacts with certain student characteristics and exacerbates the already alienating institutional nature of the school experiences for some students.

4.1.2 Urban/Rural

The geographical location of a school has implications for school climate along several dimensions such as transportation, boarding, teacher morale/turnover, and community-school relations. While there undoubtedly are climate-related issues peculiar to urban schools, only those involving rural schools were found in the studies included in the review. The absence of schools in remote areas can result in involuntary dropouts. For example, Schwager (1974) found that many of the parents interviewed in his study did not go beyond Grade 8 because there were no secondary schools near their communities at the time. While there may be more schools in remote rural areas today, these are often large centralized schools which, while offering courses leading to graduation, may contribute to the negative climate discussed above or their central location may lead to problems experienced by students associated with transportation and boarding.

4.1.3 Transportation

Schwager (1974) concluded that transportation did not represent a significant problem for the Metis and non-Status students in Northern Ontario because only 12.71 per cent of his informants reported problems. We can't tell from his report whether this issue was probed in a questionnaire or whether it simply came up in the open interviews. The NADC study also found that the distance of the school from home was rarely identified as a primary reason for quitting school. However, 71 per cent of the dropouts reported having to take a bus at one time or another as compared to 63 per cent of the stayers. Furthermore, parents, teachers, and community representatives agreed that long bus rides (30 minutes to two hours one way) were detrimental to students' academic performance, to their enthusiasm for school, and to their remaining in school. In their view, students who must endure commuting time of such long duration, become tired, bored, and lethargic; they are unable to participate in extra-curricular activities and, thus, find it more difficult to feel part of the school community.

4.1.4 Boarding

Schwager found few problems related to boarding homes among his respondents. Of the six who indicated difficulties (9.37 per cent), only 3 identified the nature of the problem: two couldn't find suitable homes and one felt he was discriminated against by his hosts. In contrast, the respondents in the NADC study were fairly unanimous in their negative perceptions of boarding. They stated that because of the necessity of boarding they felt their children didn't do as well in school, they were unable to adapt to life away from their homes, and the children usually returned back home before completing their courses.

4.2 Milieu

In school climate research, milieu includes the background characteristics of individuals or groups within the school. Some of the variables related to this dimension of school climate include both teacher and student characteristics and morale (Anderson, 1982:389).

4.2.1 Teacher Characteristics and Training

Researchers have found very little connection between teacher characteristics and student outcomes. However, one study found that the percentage of teachers with a Bachelor's degree as opposed to those with an uncompleted degree was significantly related to student achievement. Another study suggested that teacher "stability" was related to school coherence (a positive quality for school climate). Whether stability refers to the teachers' emotional condition, their job security, or the length of their stay in the same school is not clear.

Although only one of the studies under review considered teacher characteristics and training, a number of studies recommended specialized training for teachers who work in remote areas or who teach Native or Metis children. However, they do not specify what kind of specialized training would be beneficial. Several studies also recommended an increased effort to train Native and Metis teachers.

The NADC study found that 29 per cent of the parents interviewed felt that "better teachers" would improve the educational system (1984:34). Furthermore, 40 per cent of the community groups interviewed felt that teachers and administrators bear the second most important burden of responsibility for early school leavers (1984:34), while 23 per cent of parents felt they bore the most responsibility for their children's decision to leave school (1984:61). Again, "better teachers" were cited by 23 per cent of high-risk students as something which would encourage students to remain in school. All of the parents agreed that the human, caring characteristics of a teacher were most crucial to his effectiveness (1984:34). For students and parents, "better" seems to refer to the humanistic qualities of teachers rather than simply academic qualifications.

In the same study, educators identified these characteristics as important attributes for teachers in remote areas: they must relate to the community (20 per cent), accept other cultures (35 per cent), and they must be self-confident, self-reliant, and

independent (45 per cent). It is not reported whether parents and students also identified these particular characteristics.

In terms of specific training, 86 per cent of the teachers interviewed said that they had not received any special training for teaching in a unique geographical and cultural setting. Teachers suggested two main measures to improve the situation: a realistic orientation to the situation they would face (39 per cent) and study programs on Northern and Native culture (33 per cent) (1984:65).

4.2.2 Teacher Morale/Turnover

Teacher morale, although a difficult variable to measure, does appear to have a significant effect on school climate (Anderson, 1982:389). For example, Ellett et al. (1977) reported a significant link between teacher morale and both attendance and achievement for primary and secondary students (in Anderson, 1982:389). Teacher morale may also be linked to teacher stability (in the sense of length of time teaching at the same school), and this has an effect on school coherence (another measure of school climate).

In the NADC study, a lack of teacher morale is linked to the high turnover rate of teachers. This has had several consequences for school climate, most notably in the area of student-teacher relationships. The quality of these relationships was found wanting and were frequently identified by students, parents, and educators as an important reason for early school leaving. Moreover, the regular annual influx of new, inexperienced teachers who require time to adjust to their new living and working environment was viewed as having a negative impact on school climate.

4.2.3 Student Body Characteristics and Morale

The average background characteristics of the students as measured by race and SES (an indirect measure of school climate) have not been found to explain variance among schools in terms of student achievement (Anderson, 1982:399). However, student morale does seem to be related to achievement and self-concept (Anderson, 1982:399). In addition, the degree of student alienation was found to be related to school climate.

As we saw in 3.3 (above) student alienation, especially among Indian and Metis/non-Status students, was pervasive. While this alienation, as measured by the students' disinterest/dissatisfaction with school, was linked with student behaviour (attendance (3.3.1), homework (3.3.2), discipline (3.3.3) and extra-curricular activities (3.3.4)), there is little doubt that student alienation can also be related to aspects of school climate. School climate variables that contribute to student alienation will be discussed in the sections which consider the school social system (4.3) and the cultural variables that have been identified as significant in the creation of a positive/supportive/healthy school climate.

4.3 Social System Variables

Several social system variables identified in Anderson's taxonomy are relevant to our review: student-teacher relationships and community-school relationships. Counselling also emerged as an important variable in our study of the dropout literature and has been included here.

4.3.1 Student-Teacher Interaction

A number of climate studies have pointed out the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students in the creation of school climate. A more positive and coherent climate has been found to exist where faculty and students engage in non-academic activities together. In one study, these shared school activities were believed to encourage students to accept school norms and, in another, they were associated with academic achievement.

In the dropout studies, certain types of teacher-student interaction have been consistently linked to the student's decision to leave school. Wehlage and Rutter found that "teacher interest in students" was one of the three variables that measured student alienation and rejection of school (the other two were the student's perception of the school's authority and reward structures, see 4.4.2 and 4.4.3). Steinberg et al. (1984) report a study (Laosa, 1977) which found that teachers and other school personnel are more likely to interact negatively with lower class,

minority, and non-English speaking students. Specifically, it was found that as disapproving responses towards these students increased, the amount of academically related information directed towards them decreased. Moreover, it was found that the children's behaviour varied, with the favoured white middle-class pupils attempting to attract the teacher's attention more often. It was not clear from the research, however, whether this negative interaction on the part of the teacher preceded, catalyzed, or followed the students' poor academic performance (1984:120).

Wehlage and Rutter found that students' perceptions of teacher interest in the students themselves was one of three variables which measured the degree of student alienation and rejection of school (1986:382). Zamanzadeh and Prince found that dropouts usually blame the school for their failure. In their relationships with school personnel, most "dropouts seemed to be asking for more control, in the sense of attention, care, and understanding with firmness; others demanded only individual care and affection, but no discipline" (1978:309). In the Saskatchewan ICD study, problems with teachers were the second most frequently cited reason for dropping out of school (1985:40). The NADC study found that dropouts did not feel positively about their relationships with teachers, and most felt that they had been, at some time, unjustly picked on. Parents in this study attributed these problems to a lack of effective communication between students and teachers.

4.3.2 Community-School Relationships

According to Anderson, the relationship between the community and school is usually considered in terms of parent-teacher relationships. In most studies, a high level of parental involvement has been associated with successful schools. However, it would seem that in the case of racial or ethnic minority communities, the factors involved in community-school relationships may be more complex. Almost all of the studies involving Native people suggest measures to improve the relationship between the Native community and the schools. For example, Davids recommended that the department of education employ an individual of Indian ancestry, provided he retained an understanding of Indian values,

to act as an intermediary between the school and the home (1963). Schwager made an identical recommendation and, in addition, recommended "a more localized kind of decision making process" that would insure Native input that would reflect the different needs that vary from region to region. The NADC sets forth a comprehensive, practical program to increase community involvement at every level of the educational system (1984:48-51).

4.3.3 Counsellors

The studies almost universally acknowledge the critical role that both personal and career counselling plays in the student's decision to stay in or to drop out. With respect to Native students, the consensus is that counsellors must have an awareness and sympathy for Native values. Davids suggests that counsellors must "attempt to guide and help the Indian see a way in which he can share the advantage of the mainstream of society without the threat of losing his identity as an Indian" (1963:31).

Over one-half of the Indian students who graduated in Bass and Tonjes' study felt that they had received inadequate information on educational and employment opportunities. In contrast to the dropouts in the study, students who graduated expressed the desire for more guidance and counselling (1970:5). Their recommendations included special training for all teachers and counsellors of Indian children.

Twenty-six per cent of the students that responded to the question on the helpfulness of guidance counsellors in Schwager's study stated that the biggest problem was the unavailability of counsellors. Many of the parents expressed a need for "real counsellors" instead of having regular teachers filling that role. The majority of students (64 per cent) did not feel that a Native counsellor would have been any more effective in helping them to decide to remain in school than a non-Native counsellor. However, Schwager argued that this indifference towards Native counsellors was because the respondents had never had a Native counsellor and, therefore, had no basis for comparison.

The NADC study found that at least 3/4 of the dropouts in their sample did not feel comfortable about approaching school

personnel concerning their intention to leave school (1984:19). Among those who did discuss their plans to leave school, almost half felt that the teacher or counsellor contacted did not understand their position. However, 18 per cent of the dropouts stated that better career counselling would have helped to keep them in school (1984:38). When asked for suggestions for mitigatory measures, almost all the groups interviewed (dropouts, educators, and community group members) recommended better preventative school counselling as well as career counselling.

4.4 Culture Variables

Although there is little known about how the values and belief systems of various groups within a school interact with other variables, it is known that they have an impact on climate and student outcomes (Anderson, 1982:402). For example, teachers' commitment to improve students' academic performance is a significant variable in students' success. Anderson reports that futility (a climate factor) appears to be related to the students' perceptions that teachers care (a culture variable). In another study reported, student willingness to seek help (perhaps a function of peer or home culture) was related to achievement. One study found that an emphasis on group effort rather than individual competition was associated with positive academic outcomes. In the sections that follow, we present some culture-related variables that are discussed in the dropout literature.

4.4.1 Ideology-Values

All of the studies which investigate dropping out among Indian and Metis consider the tension between white middle class culture and Native values and culture. Davids noted that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs viewed schools as vehicles of integration and assimilation (1963:2). This results in either a loss of identity for Indian students (10) or a resistance on their part against the "white man's ways" (1963:14).

4.4.2 Authority Structure

In school climate research, consistency in administering both rewards and punishment is a key factor in climate and student outcomes. Consistent school values have been found to result in

greater school "coherence" and better student behaviour (Anderson, 1982:404). Again, the perceptions of the participants are as important as their observable actions.

Wehlage and Rutter have identified student perception of "Effectiveness of Discipline" and "Fairness of Discipline" as important measures of student alienation and rejection of school. In their study, dropouts expressed a higher feeling of discontent on both these measures, although the responses indicated a general feeling of discontent by all students (1986:382). In view of this, Wehlage and Rutter recommend a renewed effort to establish legitimate authority within the institution (390). Of the studies which investigate Native dropouts, only the Inner City study alludes to issues related to the school's authority. In sample quotations from case study reports, students commented that schools should treat Native students equally, that teachers shouldn't be so strict, that students should be treated like adults (with more respect) (1985:63-64).

4.4.3 Reward Structure

Rewards and praise that are frequent and public are associated with a positive school climate. Schools that recognize student accomplishments and reward good behaviour tend to have higher levels of achievement. Both of these factors are also associated with the character development of students and school coherence (a climate characteristic) (Anderson, 1982:403). None of the studies in our review examines the issue of whether the presence or absence of praise has an effect on the student's decision to drop out.

4.4.4 Task Structure

The way in which schools set tasks (both for the purposes of learning and evaluation) can be considered as cultural variables. We have already touched on the issue of individual, competitively oriented learning versus cooperative group learning. This distinction reflects one aspect of task structure.

Dropouts, as we have seen, are not successful at accomplishing the tasks the school sets for them. Repeated failure at such tasks undoubtedly engenders a negative feeling towards the educational experience for the potential dropout. An investigation of how the

high-risk student responds to the kinds of tasks presently demanded of him in school, coupled with an investigation of the learning styles peculiar to certain groups (e.g., Natives) may lead to effective mitigatory measures.

It seems that a lack of success at school tasks and the consequent lack of praise and rewards leads marginal students to a belief that the institution has rejected them (Wehlage and Rutter, 1986:385). The case studies from the Inner City study contain these comments from dropouts: "Workload was too heavy ... Make work easier ... lighter work load." (1985:63) While such comments may simply reflect laziness, they might also reflect a genuine inability on the part of certain students to cope with the demands of the task structure system imposed by the schools.

The NADC study made a radical recommendation with a view to changing the task structure system of schools in Northern Alberta (1984:71). At the primary level, at least, they urged the replacement of the cohort-grade level system with one where the pupil progresses continuously, unit by unit, according to his/her level of preparedness and ability. Wehlage and Rutter urge "a redefinition of school work" for students and teachers that will allow a greater number of students to achieve success and satisfaction and to continue their schooling (1986:390). The authors are not clear about exactly how this is to be accomplished.

4.4.5 Curriculum Responsiveness

A number of the studies recommend changes in the curriculum as a means of counteracting student alienation and disinterest. Almost all of the studies concerning Native dropouts recommend that courses in Native language, culture, and history be made available.

Schwager recommended the implementation of a curriculum that would take into account the Native cultural background. His recommendation is not specific as to whether this means the provision of additional courses in Native culture, history and language or a re-orientation of the existing curriculum to somehow accommodate a "Native" perspective however that may be defined. He also recommended that trades training programs only be implemented after confirmation with Native groups that the content of such

courses directly respond to the needs of the community. The NADC study linked the high dropout rate among Native students to groups of related factors. The high primary grade failure rate among Native children results in severe grade/age displacement which, as we have seen (3.2 above), is strongly linked to dropping out. The NADC study in turn, reports this high primary failure rate as the result of, among many things, a lack of curriculum relevance and the fact that schools have not adapted to Native customs and traditions. They urge a re-evaluation of the philosophy of education for Native communities which would be the result of a response to these fundamental questions:

> Should education for Natives in these locations be aimed at making the student competitive with the urban dweller? Should education be aimed at providing skills in the three R's and then concentrate on what is more relevant to the native students' culture and environment? Or does the answer lie some place in between the two extremes? (1984:68)

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